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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[AN UNLOOKED-FOR FRIEND.]

AN INJURED WOMAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Double Engagement," &c., &c.

CHAPTER III.

AN IDOL DOWN.

Like vice from virtue's glance, you clouds retire
Before the smile of one benignant ray.
Sleepless and sad, my soul would fain aspire,
Promethean like, to snatch ethereal fire
And draw relief from thee—sweet harbinger of
day.

THE moment Rhoda had made her confession of love she felt the sting of humiliation. Why should she make it to the man who fooled her, to him who had treated her as a plaything taken up for an hour's amusement? With a quick movement, she freed herself from his hold, and with every vein tingling with almost overwhelming emotion she hurried on.

But Vesey was by her side ere she had travelled a dozen yards, and his arm thrust through hers, and his fingers closed with a firm, persuasive grasp.

"Rhoda, darling, hear me," he pleaded. "You have misunderstood the purport of my words."

"I have not," she replied. "Do not detain me, please."

"But I must, darling, until I have told you how I am circumstanced. Matters have taken an unfortunate turn for me during the last day

or two. Only this morning I received from my uncle a——"

"Will you answer me one question?" Rhoda said, "only one?"

"Yes, darling."

"Was it your intention a week ago to marry me?"

He was not prepared for anything so point blank, and the answer faltering on his tongue, he stood convicted before her.

"Ah! I see," Rhoda said, bitterly, "you are a gentleman with a fine name, and you thought I was a poor girl who could be trifled with and put aside at your convenience. But you are mistaken, and if there were no other man on earth, and my life depended upon marrying you, I would say no, for I despise you. Do you hear? I HATE you."

"Great Heaven! what a rage you are in, Rhoda!" he exclaimed. "Who would have thought you had it in you?"

"Ah! you fancied we poor, beggarly people had no spirit," she replied, "but that only shows how foolish you are. You have bitterly insulted and wronged me, and I will never forgive you."

"Only a moment ago you told me that you loved me."

"Yes, I know, but that has left me. I spoke when I was weak. Ah! Vesey, I would have loved you, and given you my life if you had asked for it. Oh! great God! what am I saying? No, do not touch me. If you have any regard for me, leave me."

"But I want to explain," he urged. "You will not listen——"

"I will listen if you have anything to say to me that I ought to hear. Go on."

"As I was saying, Rhoda, I cannot marry

now," he began, after an ineffectual attempt to regain a hold of her hand, "and it is very doubtful if I ever shall, but——"

Rhoda was walking on with a flame in her face that had never rested there before. He followed her, still speaking.

"Surely we can remain friends. With love we could be a mutual support to each other without any of the forms that men have set up. I propose a friendship that shall outlive the ordinary love of——"

She turned and faced him, with such a look in her splendid eyes that he shrank from her. He had laid bare the hidden leprosy of his soul, and if she did not shrink from it it was because she did not fear it.

"I suppose you know what you are proposing to me?" she said.

"Again I fear you misunderstand me," he replied. "I am blundering fearfully to-night. Everything has gone wrong with me, but I had the hope of finding in you a source of consolation."

"No doubt," Rhoda answered, with a bitter smile. "You play your part well, but if I am strange to the ways of the world, I have something in my heart that tells me what is right and wrong. Which way are you going, Mr. Sutherland?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I wish to go in the opposite direction."

"You are determined upon our separating, Rhoda?"

"I am."

"And you will not listen to my explanation?"

"I do not wish to ever hear you speak again."

His face flushed angrily, and, drawing himself up, he raised his hat, bowed, and walked away by the way they had come. It was a moment of trial to Rhoda, and the impulse to call him back was upon her, but she fought it down. Had she obeyed its promptings, how different her lot would have been.

But she let him go, and when he had turned the corner of the street and disappeared without once looking back towards her she clasped her hands before her eyes and held them there for a few moments. When she took them away they were wet with tears.

"It was a foolish dream," she murmured, "but it is over. I will not live for myself again."

She crossed the road, and passing a tobacconist's shop, looked in, and saw the hands of a clock pointing to the hour of eleven. Recalling to mind that she was expected back at Madame Clarie's at that time, she quickened her pace, and hastened, as she thought, towards St. George's Street. But ere she had gone far she found herself in a place quite strange to her.

It was a noisy street, filled with noisy men and flaming women, the roadway swarmed with cabs, and restaurants and shops on either side brilliantly lighted up and crowded with those who were "seeing life." The confusion and riot bewildered her, and turning into a thoroughfare that seemed to be comparatively quiet, she walked quickly on, and made no inquiries until she had left the seething throng of pleasure-seekers some way behind her.

A policeman offered himself as a guide, and he was civil enough in response to her queries, but he seemed to have doubts as to her really being desirous of going to St. George's Street.

"It is all quiet there," he said. "Whose house do you want?"

"Madame Clarie's," Rhoda replied. "I am employed there, and I am afraid I shall be late."

"Take a cab, miss," said the policeman, changing his tone. "It's the best and safest way. The fare is a shilling. Here's an empty one coming down the street."

He hailed it, and handed her into it with more grace than is usually found in men of his class. Then he told the cabman where to drive and took his number.

"You will be all right now, miss," he said, as he closed the door, "and don't forget, the fare is a shilling—no more."

Rhoda thanked him warmly, and the cab rolled away through a number of almost deserted streets. Here and there noisy bacchanals were reeling home, or a woman in rags flitted by like a shadow (when one of these went by Rhoda shuddered and turned cold), and an occasional policeman could be seen trying the windows and doors of houses; but that was all until the cab rolled into Regent Street. A few moments later it pulled up at Madame Clarie's door.

The house was closed and dark, and with a fear in her heart that she was too late after all Rhoda got out of the cab and paid the man his fare. He put it into his pocket with a surly air, called upon his horse to "come up," and drove away. A church clock near chimed the half-hour.

With a trembling hand Rhoda rang the bell, and lightly knocked, and then waited for a response. Getting none she crossed the road and looked up at the house. There was not even a light in the attics where she and her fellow workers slept.

Dismayed Rhoda sat down upon the steps of the church and tried to think what would be the best thing to do in her painful position. To knock and ring again was the first course suggested, but she was doubtful if it would be of any use. Madame Clarie did not live in the house, she had a villa at Penge, and the locking up of the place was in the hands of the forewoman, who had a well-known aversion to rising to let a late comer in.

In addition, as Rhoda knew, she was not expected by her employer to do so. Young ladies

who would not keep good hours at Madame Clarie's establishment had to take the consequences. In the case of apprentices they were expected to go home to their friends, and the "hands" were dismissed.

Another knock and ring met with no better fortune than the first attempt. The house remained dark and there was no movement inside, and then the full terror of her position burst upon Rhoda. Where was she to go at that time of night? What was she to do? While she stood in the shadow of the doorway in a state of quiet distraction with her hands tightly clasped before her a gentleman of the genus "swell" came strolling by.

He paused, looked at her, leered and said something that she scarce heeded, but in hot haste she fled from the man as from a pestilence, walking with strong, swift steps that soon left the lounge far behind.

From that moment until hours afterwards she paused no more, but walked on and on towards her home, resolved to walk all night and appear in Maitmore Square in the morning. She would not leave her home again, she was resolved, but she would be quiet and humble, and, laying aside all ambition, work with Jane and be content.

And this resolve she kept repeating to herself as she circuitously traversed the district between St. George's Street and Westminster Bridge. Big Ben was booming the hour of one as she crossed the water. It was a fine starry night, and as she turned her face to the East she saw Venus, unknown to her by name, shining in all her magnificent reticency. Around, above, and below were other stars, bright enough in their way, but all inferior to the goddess of our planetary system.

Why should she associate herself with that star? Its brightness was no symbol of her lot, but as she, with undiminished elasticity of footstep, hastened down the road she pictured herself as a star outshining all others around her. It was a vague, misty dream after all, but she clung upon it fondly as she walked on that night—alone.

Recalling that night in after years she never could remember more than certain places of prominence. The clock tower at Westminster, certain churches, the cross roads at Newington Causeway, and the hill at Deptford leading to Blackheath. All the rest was lost or blurred like a picture that has been smudged by a malicious hand. At dawn she stood upon the wide heath looking down upon the great city with its towers, spires, and monuments rising out of the mist.

And all night long she had been thinking of Vesey. His image had haunted her as persistently as a spectre haunts a guilty soul. Wild thoughts of laying down her misery, of seeking rest in some quiet pool, had dogged her footsteps, but in the cool, grey morning the fever of her mind and soul abated, and she could think both rationally and clearly.

But more defined thought brought with it no relief. Her quick, impulsive, affectionate nature had received a shock and a bright hope was dashed to the ground. She had seen the cup, had put her lips to it, but never tasted its sweetness.

The heaviness of the blow lay in Vesey Sutherland coming out in such dark colours before her, for she had during their brief acquaintance pictured him as a man of unsullied honour and noble instincts. Time had nothing to do with her love. She loved him from the first, and if they had walked hand in hand together for years and then been rent asunder she would have suffered no more than she did that morning after a dream of a few days.

And she had hoped for so much too. What joy she had depicted to herself as being in store for her when she would show her rich and gallant husband to her friends. Vesey was to have raised up Jane and her father of course. Maitmore Square and its poor associations were to be put aside for ever; and after all he, Vesey Sutherland, her beau ideal of a noble spirit, had shown himself to be a shallow-hearted deceiver.

What else could she think? Had not every word in the final interview led to a conclusion

that would have been clear to the most unsophisticated woman? Poor as the Kellys were the people around were outwardly respectful to them. No man had dared to whisper such things to the girls before.

Then there was the humiliation that followed. How was she to account for her absence from Madame Clarie's well-conducted establishment? She did not want to say too much to Jane, who was a little given to laughing at her romantic notions. Jane was the more matter-of-fact of the two and either had not or would not encourage ambition.

Brooding over the past evening and her position she sauntered slowly homeward, too much wrapped in her gloomy thoughts to pay much heed to the signs of fatigue that exhibited themselves to others in her limping gait and weary, haggard face. People passing stared at her in wonderment, and turned to look on the shapely, comely figure of the girl with the unmistakable evidence of her having been abroad during the dark hours.

There were men who laughed and winked at each other as she went by, and women who regarded her with scorn or sighed according to their possession or lack of charity; but she heeded none of them, nor thought of aught else but her misery until she reached home.

She had travelled slowly and it was past eight o'clock when she ascended the two steps of the house and knocked at the door. Jane answered her knock and brought before her sister a pale face and eyes red with weeping. No two more disconsolate-looking girls ever faced each other.

"Rhoda, you here?"

"Yes, dear. I've come back. I am not going to Madame Clarie's any more. But you look ill, darling. What is the matter with you?"

"Come in, Rhoda," Jane said. "I can't trust myself to speak to you here."

They went into the first apartment, used as a sitting and work-room, where there were a fire burning and a kettle singing on the hob. Breakfast, however, was not laid, and the room generally was in great disorder.

"You are late this morning, Jane," Rhoda said.

"I have not been to bed," Jane replied. "Oh! Rhoda, darling, they have taken poor father away."

"Taken father away!" echoed Rhoda.

"Taken him where?"

"To prison—for a debt. He's been mixing himself up with a betting man's business and doing bills. All his year's income is mortgaged and he is in prison for fifty pounds."

Rhoda with her eyes fixed sank into a chair, breathing hard. All her own troubles vanished into thin air as she thought of her father in prison. He had always been her idol, as she was his, and home without him would be no home to her. Jane sat down, quietly weeping, as she must have been doing through the night, but Rhoda's eyes were dry.

"In prison," she said again. "And how long will they keep him there?"

"Until the money is paid," Jane answered.

"Then we must get it somewhere," Rhoda resolutely rejoined. "What can we get for the things in this house—everything?"

"Not more than thirty pounds, if we get that, and what are we to do, Rhoda, when they are gone?"

"We will think of that after father is released."

"But thirty pounds are not sufficient. There are twenty more wanted."

"Well, cannot David Moore get it? He has been saving up I suppose."

"I would not ask him for it," Jane said. "What right have I to make our troubles his? He has saved to get a home, and I do not think it would be right to take it from him."

"I would take it from anybody," Rhoda said, with a cataract-like impetuosity in her speech.

"I would beg, borrow, or steal it. I would take it from my bitterest foe and have myself trampled under foot and despised rather than let our darling lie in a prison. It will kill him, Jane."

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"It is a terrible affair," Jane replied, with a fresh burst of tears. "What shall we do—what shall we do?"

"Will you sell the things in the house?"

"No, Rhoda, it is not enough."

"Will you ask David Moore to help us?"

"How can I, darling? Would it be right to take his hard-earned money to pay a debt of father's, a debt incurred through his mixing with those wicked betting people?"

"I see," Rhoda said, with a firm, set face. "You will do nothing. Sacrifice has nothing to do with your nature, but I will get the money."

"You, Rhoda? How mad you talk. Where will you get it from?"

"I don't know, but I am resolved to do it. There is plenty of money in the world and surely there is somebody who will give us a paltry fifty pounds. I will go a begging for it and beg to one whom I would spurn if he were to offer me money for my use. Do you hear me, Jane? I am going to make a sacrifice. I will ask a man who has insulted me to lend me money."

"You are surely not in your senses, Rhoda," replied Jane. "I do not know what to make of you since you went to Madame Clarie's. Who is it that has been putting wild ideas into your head?"

"The man who shall set our father free," Rhoda replied, calmly. "And now give me a cup of tea and I will go to him. Not a word—you might as well try to check the sea as to stop me in my purpose. I was a child a week ago, now I am a woman."

Jane looked at her and saw this change she had spoken of. A week's experience had made her strong, self-reliant, and a woman.

She had learnt to run alone, and it would be useless to offer her any longer a guiding hand.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGER'S OFFER.

A sudden flash when he the maiden saw
Burned through his temples, kindled his old
blood;

His stifling breath waxed nigh too tight to draw,
He bowed and silent stood in wonderment and
awe.

Among various little things Vesey Sutherland had confided to Rhoda his address was included. He had mentioned his rooms in Clarges Street on the eve when first they met, and in a semi-festive way spoke of their barrenness and solitude "with sweet woman absent," and it was towards this place that the miserable girl hastened.

He was the only man she could think of in her distress, and of him she was going to beg. She would even kneel before him, and pray for his help if need—anything to help her father in his sore predicament.

Tom Kelly, usually so very keen in money matters, had been caught napping at last by an older and more wary spirit associated with the turf, who had thoroughly victimised him. The two did an accommodation bill together and divided the money.

The gentleman of the turf was sure he would be able to meet it, but when the day of its maturity had arrived he had disappeared.

The whole responsibility, therefore, rested upon Tom Kelly, who was promptly sued and in a trice landed in Holloway Gaol.

Imprisonment for debt has been done away with by Act of Parliament, but by a pleasant legal fiction the man who owes a modest amount and does not pay can be incarcerated for contempt of court, and kept out of the world until he is purged of his contempt by the payment of the money.

It was a great blow to him, as great as Rhoda deemed it, for he could not live away from public-house bars, billiard-rooms, and race-courses. Accustomed to the stimulus of these places he would indubitably languish if they were taken away from him.

Such a man to regain his liberty would make any sacrifice—of others—even those dearest to

him, and while Rhoda was on the way to make her great and dangerous effort to save him he was writing a needless letter imploring her to see if Madame Clarie would aid him.

"Say that I will make over my next year's income to her," he wrote, "promise anything, only get the money. I shall die here. Once free I will do my best to get some work, and you and Jane will keep the house. I won't be much expense to you. Only get the money if you love me."

What became of this letter we shall presently see.

Meanwhile we must follow Rhoda, who with the aid of an omnibus reached her destination a little before eleven o'clock.

Clarges Street is not absolutely imposing, but it has something about it that conveys an idea of wealth and good breeding to the stranger. Ballad singers, barrel organs, and beggars do not haunt it, and the boldest among street boys would hesitate to favour one of its doors with a run-away knock or ring.

Rhoda did not hesitate, her mission was a desperate one, and she would have paid the Royal Court itself a visit to carry out her object.

With a firm hand she knocked and rang at the door of the house where Vesey Sutherland lived.

A pretty housemaid, in a neat print dress and pretty little Dolly Varden cap, responded. When Rhoda asked if Vesey was at home the slightest shade of suspicion crossed the servant's face—she said he was in, but engaged with a gentleman.

"But perhaps I can take a message, miss?" she said.

"No, thanks," replied Rhoda, "I cannot send a message, or even my name. Is there a room in which I can wait?"

The servant appeared to be very doubtful, but her sympathies were with the pretty, pale face and the eager eyes that she saw before her.

Perhaps she misinterpreted the object of Rhoda, for she knew something of the ways of the world and of the sins of the bachelor portion of it, but she pitied her.

"Perhaps Mr. Sutherland would not like to be disturbed," she said.

It was a delicate way of hinting that Vesey would not care to see Rhoda at all, but it was not taken.

Rhoda was sure he would see her, as they were—here she hesitated slightly—as they were old friends.

The girl was in great doubt as to what course to pursue. She knew that Rhoda was not high born, while admitting that there was something in her air out of the ordinary run of middle-class people.

She urged her to call again, and Rhoda wanted to stay. While they were debating the point a gentleman came downstairs.

He was a man of fifty, or it might be fifty-five, hearty and hale, with a fine presence, a handsome face, and a courtly air.

His dress was that of a country squire slightly modified for a visit to town, and everything he wore, from his broad white tie to his boots, was of the best make, and arranged upon his person with the utmost care.

Grey hair and black eyes go well together, and they never went better than they did with this man, who was Vesey's uncle, Sir Archibald Sutherland.

His coming at first was unperceived by either Rhoda or the housemaid, and he paused on the lower stair and listened to the latter end of their colloquy.

"I assure you, miss, that I do not think Mr. Sutherland can see you to-day," the housemaid said.

"But I cannot go without seeing him," Rhoda replied, as she struggled with her tears. "It is most important, it really is, that I should see him."

"He will be angry if I admit you without taking up your name."

"Then tell him that Miss Rhoda Kelly wishes to see him, and must do so."

"Take up the young lady's name," said Sir Archibald from the stairs.

He had been looking at Rhoda while he waited, and his composed face had gradually assumed a look of the keenest interest—an interest that was something more than men of such years usually take in the young. His dark eyes flashed and his lips parted, slightly revealing two rows of teeth that were from the workshop of nature and unrivalled by any dentists' work, clever as dentists have now-a-days become. It was a very keen interest that Sir Archibald suddenly felt in the beautiful Rhoda.

The housemaid hearing his voice started, and turning round courtesied to the patrician, who slightly waved a white, slender hand as an indication that she was to go.

"And it is quite unnecessary to say I have anything to do with the message," he softly said to the girl as she passed him. "Simply say that Miss Kelly is waiting below and desires an interview—nothing more."

The housemaid glided up the stairs and he waited until she was out of sight. Then he advanced and bowed with the grace of a Chesterfield to Rhoda.

"You are the Miss Kelly who lives in Maisemore Square, I believe?" he said.

Rhoda's face assumed a little colour, and her eyes expressed surprise as she bowed in return, a little moved by this very handsome gentleman with the courtly air.

He laughed softly and pleasantly and took her hand between his in a manner that might be meant to be fatherly, but to Rhoda certainly did not appear so. But she let it rest.

"I fear," he said, "that my nephew has not treated you well."

"It is not a subject I would care to discuss," Rhoda answered. "I hope you will forgive me if I do not answer your question."

"Well, well, child," he said, "I will not quarrel with you on that score. But at least you may tell me why you are here now."

"I do not think I need hesitate to do that," Rhoda said, after a moment's reflection. "I have come to ask him to help us. We are in sore distress at home."

"In distress, child? What is it? No rent paid and those leeches the bailiffs in the house?"

"Worse than that," said Rhoda, with a sigh. "My father is in prison for debt—and a debt not his own."

"How much is it?"

"Fifty pounds."

"A large sum to some people," said Sir Archibald, "but a bagatelle to others. And so you have come to Vesey to help you."

"Yes," replied Rhoda, lowering her eyes under his penetrating gaze.

"After you have quarrelled, eh, child?"

"He was very cruel to me," said Rhoda, quietly. "Ah! I have said more than I wished to; but he was not kind—and I—I hoped that he would lend me this money to—make some amends."

"I see," said Sir Archibald, pleasantly, "and you think he will help you in your distress, eh, child?"

"I have hoped so or I should not be here," replied Rhoda.

"Well, child, I do not think he will, but that does not debar you from trying what is in him. Should you fail then come to Purser's Hotel in Berkeley Square and ask for me. I think I know somebody who will lend you fifty pounds."

He had held her hand all this time, and as he uttered those last words he gave it a gentle pressure and let it fall. Then he raised his hat, bowed to her as he might have done to a duchess, and walked away, with the gracefully easy step of youth. His years sat very lightly upon him indeed, and so Rhoda thought.

She admired him more than any man she had ever met before, and her admiration was mingled with reverence. She had never seen a man with whom Time had been so kind—white hairs had not aged him and the light of early manhood yet shone in his dark, lustrous eyes.

But she had not long to muse upon him, for the housemaid came tripping lightly down with a message from Vesey saying that he would see

"I do not wish to ever hear you speak again."

His face flushed angrily, and, drawing himself up, he raised his hat, bowed, and walked away by the way they had come. It was a moment of trial to Rhoda, and the impulse to call him back was upon her, but she fought it down. Had she obeyed its promptings, how different her lot would have been.

But she let him go, and when he had turned the corner of the street and disappeared without once looking back towards her she clasped her hands before her eyes and held them there for a few moments. When she took them away they were wet with tears.

"It was a foolish dream," she murmured, "but it is over. I will not live for myself again."

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The house was closed and dark, and with a fear in her heart that she was too late after all Rhoda got out of the cab and paid the man his fare. He put it into his pocket with a surly air, called upon his horse to "come up," and drove away. A church clock near chimed the half-hour.

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He paused, looked at her, leered and said something that she scarce heeded, but in hot haste she fled from the man as from a pestilence, walking with strong, swift steps that soon left the loungers far behind.

From that moment until hours afterwards she paused no more, but walked on and on towards her home, resolved to walk all night and appear in Maitmore Square in the morning. She would not leave her home again, she was resolved, but she would be quiet and humble, and, laying aside all ambition, work with Jane and be content.

And this resolve she kept repeating to herself as she circuitously traversed the district between St. George's Street and Westminster Bridge. Big Ben was booming the hour of one as she crossed the water. It was a fine starry night, and as she turned her face to the East she saw Venus, unknown to her by name, shining in all her magnificent regality. Around, above, and below were other stars, bright enough in their way, but all inferior to the goddess of our planetary system.

Why should she associate herself with that star? Its brightness was no symbol of her lot, but as she, with undiminished elasticity of footstep, hastened down the road she pictured herself as a star outshining all others around her. It was a vague, misty dream after all, but she dwelt upon it fondly as she walked on that night alone.

Recalling that night in after years she never could remember more than certain places of prominence. The clock tower at Westminster, certain churches, the cross roads at Newington Causeway, and the hill at Deptford leading to Blackheath. All the rest was lost or blurred like a picture that has been smudged by a malicious hand. At dawn she stood upon the wide heath looking down upon the great city with its towers, spires, and monuments rising out of the mist.

And all night long she had been thinking of Vesey. His image had haunted her as persistently as a spectre haunts a guilty soul. Wild thoughts of laying down her misery, of seeking rest in some quiet pool, had dogged her footsteps, but in the cool, grey morning the fever of her mind and soul abated, and she could think both rationally and clearly.

But more defined thought brought with it no relief. Her quick, impulsive, affectionate nature had received a shock and a bright hope was dashed to the ground. She had seen the cup, had put her lips to it, but never tasted its sweetness.

The heaviness of the blow lay in Vesey Sutherland coming out in such dark colours before her, for she had during their brief acquaintance pictured him as a man of unsullied honour and noble instincts. Time had nothing to do with her love. She loved him from the first, and if they had walked hand in hand together for years and then been rent asunder she would have suffered no more than she did that morning after a dream of a few days.

And she had hoped for so much too. What joy she had depicted to herself as being in store for her when she would show her rich and gallant husband to her friends. Vesey was to have raised up Jane and her father of course. Maitmore Square and its poor associations were to be put aside for ever; and after all he, Vesey Sutherland, her beau ideal of a noble spirit, had shown himself to be a shallow-hearted deceiver.

What else could she think? Had not every word in the final interview led to a conclusion

that would have been clear to the most unsophisticated woman? Poor as the Kellys were the people around were outwardly respectful to them. No man had dared to whisper such things to the girls before.

Then there was the humiliation that followed. How was she to account for her absence from Madame Clarie's well-conducted establishment? She did not want to say too much to Jane, who was a little given to laughing at her romantic notions. Jane was the more matter-of-fact of the two and either had not or would not encourage ambition.

Brooding over the past evening and her position she sauntered slowly homeward, too much wrapped in her gloomy thoughts to pay much heed to the signs of fatigue that exhibited themselves to others in her limping gait and weary, haggard face. People passing stared at her in wonderment, and turned to look on the shapely, comely figure of the girl with the unmistakable evidence of her having been abroad during the dark hours.

There were men who laughed and winked at each other as she went by, and women who regarded her with scorn or sighed according to their possession or lack of charity; but she heeded none of them, nor thought of aught else but her misery until she reached home.

She had travelled slowly and it was past eight o'clock when she ascended the two steps of the house and knocked at the door. Jane answered her knock and brought before her sister a pale face and eyes red with weeping. No two more disconsolate-looking girls ever faced each other.

"Rhoda, you're here?"

"Yes, dear. I've come back. I am not going to Madame Clarie's any more. But you look ill, darling. What is the matter with you?"

"Come in, Rhoda," Jane said. "I can't trust myself to speak to you here."

They went into the first apartment, used as a sitting and work-room, where there were a fire burning and a kettle singing on the hob. Breakfast, however, was not laid, and the room generally was in great disorder.

"You are late this morning, Jane," Rhoda said.

"I have not been to bed," Jane replied. "Oh! Rhoda, darling, they have taken poor father away."

"Taken father away!" echoed Rhoda. "Taken him where?"

"To prison—for a debt. He's been mixing himself up with a betting man's business and doing bills. All his year's income is mortgaged and he is in prison for fifty pounds."

Rhoda with her eyes fixed sank into a chair, breathing hard. All her own troubles vanished into thin air as she thought of her father in prison. He had always been her idol, as she was his, and home without him would be no home to her. Jane sat down, quietly weeping, as she must have been doing through the night, but Rhoda's eyes were dry.

"In prison," she said again. "And how long will they keep him there?"

"Until the money is paid," Jane answered.

"Then we must get it somewhere," Rhoda resolutely rejoined. "What can we get for the things in this house—everything?"

"Not more than thirty pounds, if we get that, and what are we to do, Rhoda, when they are gone?"

"We will think of that after father is released."

"But thirty pounds are not sufficient. There are twenty more wanted."

"Well, cannot David Moore get it? He has been saving up I suppose."

"I would not ask him for it," Jane said. "What right have I to make our troubles his? He has saved to get a home, and I do not think it would be right to take it from him."

"I would take it from anybody," Rhoda said, with a cataract-like impetuosity in her speech.

"I would beg, borrow, or steal it. I would take it from my bitterest foe and have myself trampled under foot and despised rather than let our darling lie in a prison. It will kill him, Jane."

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"It is a terrible affair," Jane replied, with a fresh burst of tears. "What shall we do—what shall we do?"

"Will you sell the things in the house?"

"No, Rhoda, it is not enough."

"Will you ask David Moore to help us?"

"How can I, darling? Would it be right to take his hard-earned money to pay a debt of father's, a debt incurred through his mixing with those wicked betting people?"

"I see," Rhoda said, with a firm, set face. "You will do nothing. Sacrifice has nothing to do with your nature, but I will get the money."

"You, Rhoda? How mad you talk. Where will you get it from?"

"I don't know, but I am resolved to do it. There is plenty of money in the world and surely there is somebody who will give us a paltry fifty pounds. I will go a begging for it and beg to one whom I would spurn if he were to offer me money for my use. Do you hear me, Jane? I am going to make a sacrifice. I will ask a man who has insulted me to lend me money."

"You are surely not in your senses, Rhoda," replied Jane. "I do not know what to make of you since you went to Madame Clarie's. Who is it that has been putting wild ideas into your head?"

"The man who shall set our father free," Rhoda replied, calmly. "And now give me a cup of tea and I will go to him. Not a word—no might as well try to check the sea as to stop me in my purpose. I was a child a week ago, now I am a woman."

Jane looked at her and saw this change she had spoken of. A week's experience had made her strong, self-reliant, and a woman.

She had learnt to run alone, and it would be useless to offer her any longer a guiding hand.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGER'S OFFER.

A sudden flush when he the maiden saw
Burned through his temples, kindled his old blood;

His stifling breath waxed nigh too tight to draw,
He bowed and silent stood in wonderment and awe.

Among various little things Vesey Sutherland had confided to Rhoda his address was included. He had mentioned his rooms in Clarges Street on the eve when first they met, and in a semi-jesting way spoke of their barrenness and solitude "with sweet woman absent," and it was towards this place that the miserable girl hastened.

He was the only man she could think of in her distress, and of him she was going to beg. She would even kneel before him, and pray for his help if need—anything to help her father in his sore predicament.

Tom Kelly, usually so very keen in money matters, had been caught napping at last by an older and more wary spirit associated with the turf, who had thoroughly victimised him. The two did an accommodation bill together and divided the money.

The gentleman of the turf was sure he would be able to meet it, but when the day of its maturity had arrived he had disappeared.

The whole responsibility, therefore, rested upon Tom Kelly, who was promptly sued and in a trice landed in Holloway Gaol.

Imprisonment for debt has been done away with by Act of Parliament, but by a pleasant legal fiction the man who owes a modest amount and does not pay can be incarcerated for contempt of court, and kept out of the world until he is purged of his contempt by the payment of the money.

It was a great blow to him, as great as Rhoda deemed it, for he could not live away from public-house bars, billiard-rooms, and race-courses. Accustomed to the stimulus of these places he would indubitably languish if they were taken away from him.

Such a man to regain his liberty would make any sacrifice—of others—even those dearest to

him, and while Rhoda was on the way to make her great and dangerous effort to save him he was writing a needless letter imploring her to see if Madame Clarie would aid him.

"Say that I will make over my next year's income to her," he wrote, "promise anything, only get the money. I shall die here. Once free I will do my best to get some work, and you and Jane will keep the house. I won't be much expense to you. Only get the money if you love me."

What became of this letter we shall presently see.

Meanwhile we must follow Rhoda, who with the aid of an omnibus reached her destination a little before eleven o'clock.

Clarges Street is not absolutely imposing, but it has something about it that conveys an idea of wealth and good breeding to the stranger. Ballad singers, barrel organs, and beggars do not haunt it, and the boldest among street boys would hesitate to favour one of its doors with a run-away knock or ring.

Rhoda did not hesitate, her mission was a desperate one, and she would have paid the Royal Court itself a visit to carry out her object.

With a firm hand she knocked and rang at the door of the house where Vesey Sutherland lived.

A pretty housemaid, in a neat print dress and pretty little Dolly Varden cap, responded. When Rhoda asked if Vesey was at home the slightest shade of suspicion crossed the servant's face—she said he was in, but engaged with a gentleman.

"But perhaps I can take a message, miss?" she said.

"No, thanks," replied Rhoda, "I cannot send a message, or even my name. Is there a room in which I can wait?"

The servant appeared to be very doubtful, but her sympathies were with the pretty, pale face and the eager eyes that she saw before her.

Perhaps she misinterpreted the object of Rhoda, for she knew something of the ways of the world and of the sins of the bachelor portion of it, but she pitied her.

"Perhaps Mr. Sutherland would not like to be disturbed," she said.

It was a delicate way of hinting that Vesey would not care to see Rhoda at all, but it was not taken.

Rhoda was sure he would see her, as they were—here she hesitated slightly—as they were old friends.

The girl was in great doubt as to what course to pursue. She knew that Rhoda was not high born, while admitting that there was something in her air out of the ordinary run of middle-class people.

She urged her to call again, and Rhoda wanted to stay. While they were debating the point a gentleman came downstairs.

He was a man of fifty, or it might be fifty-five, hearty and hale, with a fine presence, a handsome face, and a courtly air.

His dress was that of a country squire slightly modified for a visit to town, and everything he wore, from his broad white tie to his boots, was of the best make, and arranged upon his person with the utmost care.

Grey hair and black eyes go well together, and they never went better than they did with this man, who was Vesey's uncle, Sir Archibald Sutherland.

His coming at first was unperceived by either Rhoda or the housemaid, and he paused on the lower stair and listened to the latter end of their colloquy.

"I assure you, miss, that I do not think Mr. Sutherland can see you to-day," the housemaid said.

"But I cannot go without seeing him," Rhoda replied, as she struggled with her tears. "It is most important, it really is, that I should see him."

"He will be angry if I admit you without taking up your name."

"Then tell him that Miss Rhoda Kelly wishes to see him, and must do so."

"Take up the young lady's name," said Sir Archibald from the stairs.

He had been looking at Rhoda while he waited, and his composed face had gradually assumed a look of the keenest interest—an interest that was something more than men of such years usually take in the young. His dark eyes flashed and his lips parted, slightly revealing two rows of teeth that were from the workshop of nature and unrivalled by any dentists' work, clever as dentists have now-a-days become. It was a very keen interest that Sir Archibald suddenly felt in the beautiful Rhoda.

The housemaid hearing his voice started, and turning round courtesied to the patrician, who slightly waved a white, slender hand as an indication that she was to go.

"And it is quite unnecessary to say I have anything to do with the message," he softly said to the girl as she passed him. "Simply say that Miss Kelly is waiting below and desires an interview—nothing more."

The housemaid glided up the stairs and he waited until she was out of sight. Then he advanced and bowed with the grace of a Chesterfield to Rhoda.

"You are the Miss Kelly who lives in Mais-more Square, I believe?" he said.

Rhoda's face assumed a little colour, and her eyes expressed surprise as she bowed in return, a little moved by this very handsome gentleman with the courtly air.

He laughed softly and pleasantly and took her hand between his in a manner that might be meant to be fatherly, but to Rhoda certainly did not appear so. But she let it rest.

"I fear," he said, "that my nephew has not treated you well."

"It is not a subject I would care to discuss," Rhoda answered. "I hope you will forgive me if I do not answer your question."

"Well, well, child," he said, "I will not quarrel with you on that score. But at least you may tell me why you are here now."

"I do not think I need hesitate to do that," Rhoda said, after a moment's reflection. "I have come to ask him to help us. We are in sore distress at home."

"In distress, child? What is it? No rent paid and those leeches the bailiffs in the house?"

"Worse than that," said Rhoda, with a sigh. "My father is in prison for debt—and a debt not his own."

"How much is it?"

"Fifty pounds."

"A large sum to some people," said Sir Archibald, "but a bagatelle to others. And so you have come to Vesey to help you."

"Yes," replied Rhoda, lowering her eyes under his penetrating gaze.

"After you have quarrelled, eh, child?"

"He was very cruel to me," said Rhoda, quietly. "Ah! I have said more than I wished to; but he was not kind—and I—I hoped that he would lend me this money to—make some amends."

"I see," said Sir Archibald, pleasantly, "and you think he will help you in your distress, eh, child?"

"I have hoped so or I should not be here," replied Rhoda.

"Well, child, I do not think he will, but that does not debar you from trying what is in him. Should you fail then come to Purser's Hotel in Berkeley Square and ask for me. I think I know somebody who will lend you fifty pounds."

He had held her hand all this time, and as he uttered those last words he gave it a gentle pressure and let it fall. Then he raised his hat, bowed to her as he might have done to a duchess, and walked away, with the gracefully easy step of youth. His years sat very lightly upon him indeed, and so Rhoda thought.

She admired him more than any man she had ever met before, and her admiration was mingled with reverence. She had never seen a man with whom Time had been so kind—white hairs had not aged him and the light of early manhood yet shone in his dark, lustrous eyes.

But she had not long to muse upon him, for the housemaid came tripping lightly down with a message from Vesey saying that he would see

her, and Rhoda, with an unaccountable lessening of interest in her mission as far as her lover was concerned, followed the girl upstairs.

Vesey Sutherland with a dark look upon his face was standing upon the hearthrug with his hands behind him, looking very much like a man who was receiving an unwelcome visitor. He bowed as she entered and asked her to sit down, but she remained standing with her eyes fixed upon him.

"To what strange change in the atmosphere am I indebted for the honour of this visit?" he asked.

"I want you," said Rhoda, speaking very slowly, "to lend me fifty pounds."

"A very modest request surely," he replied, with a rising sneer upon his lips. "A very modest request indeed."

"I want it so very badly or I should not be here," pleaded Rhoda. "You shall have it again, indeed you shall. My father will pay you back as soon as he is free. They have put him in prison."

"Let me be frank with you, Rhoda," said Vesey, with his eyes cast down. "I cannot help you. I have need of help myself. We parted last night as I thought for ever. It is a pity you came here, the further we are apart the better for us both."

"I know that all love is at an end," returned Rhoda, with a quiver in her voice, "but I thought you would have done for me what I would gladly have done for you if it had been in my power. If you had come to me in distress I would only have remembered the better part of our acquaintance and given you what I had."

"All that is very grand talk," Vesey rejoined, "and you must excuse me if I am not touched by it. Your father is in trouble, so am I—he is poor, and so am I. There is no heavier heart than mine in the breast of living man."

She went up to him and laid her hand upon his arm with a look of pity in her fair young face.

He glanced at it but did not appear to be moved.

"I am sorry you are so poor, Vesey; but are you sure you are not jesting with me?"

"I have done with jesting, since my whole life hitherto appears to be a huge practical joke that is very painful to me."

"But you have rich relatives, Vesey," Rhoda said.

"I have relatives who are very rich," he replied.

"And could you not ask them for what I want? It is not much for them," then remembering the expression Sir Archibald had used, she added, gravely, "a mere bagatelle."

Vesey looked again at her and laughed rather hardly. It amused him he told her to hear her speaking of fifty pounds as a bagatelle. It was the language of people born under the shadow of a coronet.

"But of my kindred," he said, "I would not beg for myself, much less for a man whom I have never met. You waste your time."

She turned from him with a sigh and walked halfway to the door. There she halted, waiting for him to speak a word more tender than had passed his lips that morning, but it was not spoken, and she left him.

As she went softly down the stairs with a heart as heavy as his, heavy as it might be, her mind reverted to the interview she had with Sir Archibald and the promise he had made. Of him the money she knew could be obtained, but she shrank from applying for it.

While she fancied that Vesey was to be mistrusted she had come fearlessly to beg of him, but Sir Archibald, in whom she could perceive nothing to fear, she shrank from.

Her instincts were a better guide than her judgment.

No, she would not go to Sir Archibald—at least, for a few hours. Something might have turned up at home to help her father, and thither she would go.

It was just possible that the man who had brought about all this trouble might have re-

pent of his sin and sought to make amends by paying the money.

Rhoda had a great deal of faith in man yet, and her experience of people who got their friends to cash bills for them was limited.

Every penny of money being now an object she walked back to Malsmore Square, where she found Jane more composed but without any good tidings for her.

Rhoda was now thoroughly worn out, and lay down awhile to rest, falling quickly into a deep slumber.

Jane let her sleep on until seven in the evening. The arrival of the postman with a letter for her necessitated her being awakened. Rhoda on breaking the envelope found inside a few curt words and an enclosure. The curt words conveyed an intimation to the effect that she had broken her indentures and must consider herself dismissed, and the letter was from her father, who had sent it to St. George's Street believing Rhoda would be there.

She opened it and with a heart almost breaking read his selfish appeal. It roused to their fullest pitch her tenderest and purest emotions, for she loved her father with an intensity rarely found in a child.

He would die in that prison, he declared, but she was resolved he should not die. At any cost he must be released.

"Get me a cup of tea quick, Jane," she said. "I am going out."

"Where to now, darling?" Jane asked.

"I shall not be long," Rhoda answered, equivocally. "Do not worry me, dear; I am going to do what I can to help father."

Jane yielded to the stronger spirit of the two and said no more, and in five minutes the tea was ready.

Rhoda drank a cup, but she could eat nothing, and the alluring thin slice of bread and butter Jane cut for her was left untasted. She put her bonnet and jacket on and kissed her sister affectionately.

"I shall come back with the money for father," she said.

Outside she paused upon the doorstep to examine her scantily-lined purse. It contained just three shillings, enough for her purpose, and when she reached the Old Kent Road she hailed a hansom cab and got in.

"Where to, miss?" asked the driver.

"Purser's Hotel, Berkeley Square," she replied.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

EASY TEST FOR THE PURITY OF OLIVE OIL.

When it is desired only to ascertain whether the oil is pure or not without precise reference to the nature of the oils used in adulteration, take equal quantities of olive oil known to be pure and the oil to be tested, place the samples in separate test tubes, into which a good thermometer may also be inserted, and heat each separately to a temperature of 482 deg. Fah. The pure oil will become somewhat paler during the heating, while the adulterated oil will turn darker. The pure oil will emit a pleasant smell, while the adulterant oils will give off an offensive odour.

TO PREVENT CLOUDING OF MIRRORS BY MOISTURE.—By being coated over their surface with glycerine the clouding of glass mirrors by the accumulation of condensed water vapour will be prevented for a considerable time. The attraction of the glycerine is so great for the water as to absorb the latter as fast as deposited. This hint may prove of great use to dentists, who are frequently troubled by the clouding of mouth-mirrors, and it may also be of value to those who are compelled to shave themselves in chilly apartments.

PARAFFINE AS A WOOD PRESERVER.—A German chemist, Dr. Schäl, has established the useful fact that wood impregnated with paraffine

is preserved from rot, especially when employed in alizarine manufactures, where it is exposed to the decaying action of damp, acid, and alkaline lyes. Wooden vessels which become totally rotten in two months last for two years when impregnated with paraffine. The preparation of the wood is effected by drying it in warm air for three weeks, then steeping in melted paraffine to which has been added some petroleum ether or sulphuret of carbon. In preparing this bath great care must, however, be exercised, owing to the inflammability of its ingredients. To prevent the paraffine from escaping from the pores, the wood should be coated with oil varnish or soluble glass, washed after drying with diluted hydrochloric acid. The silicic acid thus formed clogs up the pores from the outside, and protects the paraffine from the action of water. Paraffine, melted with equal parts of linseed or rapeseed oil, is also, according to Dr. Schäl, useful for coating iron vessels, which in chemical manufactures are otherwise very liable to rust.

A CASE OF LEUCODERMA.—Dr. J. H. Thompson, of Goshen, states that there is a negro of quite advanced age living in that village, whose case gives an affirmative answer to the question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" He furnishes a unique example of the rare skin affection known as leucoderma, or achroma. The transformation has been in gradual progress for several years, until at the present date the man, formerly of typical negro blackness, has become of fair Caucasian whiteness in at least half extent of surface. He is, as always happens in leucoderma, piebald as regards transformation. As an extraordinary specimen of a dermatological lesion the individual is a decided curiosity.

RESTORING THE DEAD.—Professor Fort has presented the question of premature interments to the French Academy in a paper on artificial respiration. One fact he mentions is that he was enabled to restore to life a child three years old by practising artificial respiration on it some four hours, commencing three hours and a half after apparent death. A similar case is reported by Dr. Fournol, of Billancourt, who reanimated a nearly drowned person after four hours of artificial respiration. This person had been in the water ten minutes, and the doctor arrived one hour after asphyxia. Professor Fort advocates also the utility of artificial respiration in order to eliminate the poison from the lungs and glands. The length of time it is desirable to practise artificial respiration in any case of apparent death from asphyxia may be said to be several hours.

ABSORPTION OF HEAT IN ASSUMING THE SPHEROIDAL FORM.—It is a curious fact, lately noted by M. Boutigny, that if boiling-water be projected on an incandescent surface, its temperature falls at once to 97 deg. C. He is of opinion that this is due to work expended in production of the spheroidal state.

A TRIANGULAR METEOR.—A meteoric stone fell at Wiener Neustadt a few days ago, near the post office, and penetrated deeply into the gravel-covered road. The phenomenon was witnessed by several persons, who all declare that the meteor showed a brilliant light. Upon inspection a triangular hole was discovered of 5 centimètres width; the ground was frozen at the time. The meteoric stone was excavated in the presence of Dr. Schöber, director of the Wiener Neustadt High School. It weighs 375 grammes, is triangular in shape, its exterior is crystalline, with curious blackish, greyish, and yellow-reddish patches. Here and there metallic parts give a brilliant lustre. Its specific weight is very high, its hardness about 9. An analysis is now being made.

HYDRAULIC PROPELLERS.—A new hydraulic ship has been built in Germany, and on her trial recently accomplished nearly nine knots an hour. More than 200 years ago a method of propelling vessels by expelling water from the stern received some recognition, but all attempts to obtain high speeds have failed. A new method is based on the assumption that the propelling force depends on the contact of surfaces, and not the sectional area of the flowing mass, so a number of tubes with narrow outlets are used instead of one large tube.

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[ARCADIA.]

A BURIED SIN; OR, HAUNTED LIVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Kate Branksome's Foe," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

His snares were set,
And in every net
Was a struggling human soul.

"OLD Merriton Street, City. No. 11."

The cabman touches his hat. St. John Darrell springs into the hansom, and carefully shuts out drizzling rain which falls steadily. The broad streets look damp and woe-begone, but swift-footed pedestrians, carrying umbrellas, throng the pavements, and omnibuses wending eastward are crammed inside and out with working bees hastening to their hives.

They are bees, and he is a human fly with ten thousand pounds in his breast pocket; 11, Old Merriton Street, is the spider's den.

The spider is already there with a heap of unopened letters before him, a waste-paper basket at his feet, a slowly growing pile of read correspondence, with sundry abbreviations and cabalistic signs in red ink. The ink might be the blood of his victims, for each epistle represents a mesh of the web which spreads north, south, east, and west throughout the land. There are two or three delicate and intricate meshes put carefully aside for special personal attention. Over one, written in coarse, sprawling caligraphy he has mused quite five minutes. As for the increasing pile of raw material it will go out presently when complete to be woven by inferior insects in the outer office.

He is a fat and bloated spider, dressed in sombre black, relieved by massive jewellery and an immense white neckcloth, wound in old-fashioned, clerical style high about the throat. That neckcloth is the most remunerative investment he has ever made on his own behalf. Mrs. Spider and the girls object to it, and to the funereal character of his attire; but he only shakes his portly sides with silent laughter, and bids them "Wait a little, my dears."

Oh! it is a cunning web and a costly that he spins. The annual totals of his postage stamps account would maintain a dozen respectable families. He issues daily bulletins, his own printed opinions of stocks and shares. He has his private financial organ, with its sweeping denunciations of fraudulent directors and rotten companies.

Twice he has been mulcted in nominal damages for actionable reflections upon unprincipled financiers, and the investing public have come rushing to him like so many—flies—as a broker of unswerving morality and unimpeachable rectitude, the only adviser they can fully trust.

Leading articles hold him up to national admiration as a martyr upon 'Change, or extol a scheme with which he is connected as bearing in his name the surest guarantee of soundness and success, and it would seem that incorruptible leader-writers employ him to remodel their own little investments, for they often cash cheques bearing his well-known signature.

It is a full-blooded, plethoric fly which stares from the windows of the cab at the shop windows, at the Blue-coat School, at Newgate, at Benson's clocks, at the "Old Lady of Thread-needle Street." A fly which will feel easier and more lively when it has been relieved of a few thousands. A fly which is seized amicably by two feelers as a preliminary proceeding.

"Will you come into my parlour?" says the spider.

St. John enters, pulls out his pocket-book, lays down the notes.

"Ah!" sighs the spider, carelessly. "How much?"

"Ten thousand."

The spider turns over the notes, flings them down, and drops a paper-weight jauntily upon them with a manner which implies:

"The merest bagatelle, my good sir; the merest bagatelle."

"For investment, I presume?"

"Exactly. I come to ask your advice."

The spider flings himself back in his chair, elevates his chin to an angle of forty-five degrees, thrusts his thumbs into the two pockets of his vest, and assumes a sage and sphinx-like expression. His eyes close for an instant, perhaps to hide a gleam of light which brightens them momentarily.

"But first I must ask you to invest half the amount, five thousand pounds, that is, in the joint names of a friend (a Mr. Brabazon) and myself, in Consols, according to the particulars upon this half-sheet of paper."

Were it not for the uniform dulness of the day one might imagine the sun had gone behind a cloud, and that the sudden shadow had fallen upon the broker's face. It clears instantly, however.

"My dear sir, I cannot too highly extol your prudence. It far surpasses that of many—many of the most clear-sighted investors I know. They cannot content themselves with what they call the beggarly return the government securities offer."

"It is, indeed, very low, but this transaction is a kind of trust one, and I have no option."

"You are not going to tell me," exclaims the spider, waggishly, and shaking his head in mock reproof, "that you are so greedy, so appallingly greedy, as to desire more than three per cent. for the remainder? Come, come, Mr. Darrell, you should leave such acuteness to us City men, and be satisfied with the good, old-fashioned ways."

That is what the tongue says, but pointing forefinger and appreciative, complimentary smile imply something more.

"Mr. Darrell, I am moved to surprise and admiration of your shrewdness. You are unquestionably in the right."

"I do not care about high interest at present, but I should like to put the money into a safe undertaking, now comparatively unremunerative, but which may be expected to pay well at some future time. My desire is based upon the conclusion that as dividends increase prices will rise to a premium, and—"

"Why—here, I have the very thing," cries the broker, excitedly, laying his hand on the letter in sprawling caligraphy. Then he stops in well-feigned confusion, and makes a show of compressing his lips with determined reticence.

"The very thing—," repeats St. John.

"My dear sir, I beg your pardon most heartily for interrupting you. Pray continue."

"But you were about to tell me of some-

thing."

The broker looks at him in silence with a peculiar smile, but the silence is more impressive than words. The man is a born facial actor. There flit in rapid succession across his fat countenance admiring astonishment at the other's penetration—a growing humorous inclination to reward it—carefully preserved taciturnity giving way by degrees.

"Mr. Darrell," he says, with comical solemnity, and an enforcing of every word with the huge forefinger—"Mr. Darrell, you came to me for advice."

He stops, and as he seems to expect a reply, St. John says:

"I did."

"You came to me for advice as to the investment of five thousand pounds."

"Yes."

"You expressed your own views relative to that investment, and they coincided so remarkably with a description which lies here," and the fat hand pats the table gently, "of an undertaking with which a man is obliged under pecuniary pressure to close his connection that I was momentarily betrayed into departure from customary caution and reserve."

"What is the undertaking?"

With a slight motion of the hand the broker waves away the question.

"Sir, I have a character to support; I have a reputation to keep up. You come to me for advice, and I give it you, sound advice, by acting upon which you will neither gain nor lose a penny. There are our own and Indian government securities, there are good railway preference shares, there are a few safe colonial securities, there are a dozen other things which stand high in public estimation. Split up your five thousand pounds into ten portions, and sink each portion according to a list I will draw out in two minutes. You will obtain an average interest of four per cent., or a little more, and as any slight depreciation of one stock will be counterbalanced by slight improvement in another your original capital may at any moment be recovered intact."

The broker takes up the letter in sprawling caligraphy, rolls it into a paper tube and pats his knee with it. His air is that of a man humbly conscious he has done his duty, and happy in that consciousness.

"Put yourself in my place," says St. John.

"Would you pursue the course suggested?"

"My dear sir, you ask an impossibility. No man yet succeeded in putting himself in the place of another, his individuality must prevent it. If I could content myself with absolute safety, low interest, stagnant capital, I should invest as I recommend you to do."

"And if not?"

The broker smiles again. His glance falls upon the tube of paper in his hand.

"Will you tell me, as a special favour," asks St. John, "what that 'something' is to which your thoughts reverted when I described my views."

"A thing I decline to recommend—a thing I positively refuse to recommend, remember that. The most risky of all speculations—a mining venture." His looks finish the sentence. They say "the advantages of which are so obvious further recommendation is needless."

"But surely mines pay well sometimes?"

"Pay? A good mine is an El Dorado to its shareholders; but," the caution returns, "there are so many swindles."

"Will you tell me the contents of that letter?"

"I will, under protest. You must distinctly understand I wash my hands of the consequences."

"Of course. What is the writer?"

"A man of great financial ability, of sound judgment, but of a character which has one grand defect—want of caution. His schemes are excellent, but all schemes require time to bring a harvest, and sometimes others reap what he has sown, because he is working in distant fields. Do you follow me?"

"I think so."

"Six years ago he and a mining engineer were knocking about Mexico, and they came across an old abandoned silver mine. The engineer, a shrewd, practical fellow, went down at the risk of his life and explored it."

"Yes."

"They came to the conclusion it might be worked with small outlay. The financier had a few thousands at command. They acquired the mine and got it to yield. Then they started a company to buy 'The Esmeralda Silver Mine,' capital one hundred thousand pounds, in ten thousand ten-pound shares, fully paid up."

"Well?"

"The shares were taken without much difficulty, for it was known the financier thought so well of his mine he intended holding the five thousand shares allotted in purchase. The first year a good dividend was paid, and the shares rose to a premium."

"Did the financier sell?"

"Not he. He thought too well of the Esmeralda, unfortunately, for in the second year supports or something gave way, and the mine was flooded. You must remember the original work of reclamation carried on at the financier's sole expense was necessarily hasty and superficial. The mine was flooded."

"Well?"

"Down went the shares, but the financier held on. He knew or believed that when once the water could be pumped out all would be well again."

"And was it?"

"It was never pumped out, sir, for want of funds. Half the share capital had been allotted in purchase; the remaining half had been almost all spent in costly machinery, etc. The shares being fully paid up, no call could be made; preference shares could not be issued by a mine not in working order; there was no means of meeting such an emergency. It was a fatal oversight in the original scheme."

"Could they not borrow?"

"No one would lend at first, and so things dragged on. Within the last few months a loan has been contracted, the pumping out has begun, and in a year or two the mine will be again in working order it is hoped. But meanwhile our financier has locked up every sovereign he possesses in new and promising speculations and must have more money."

"Can he not sell some of these shares?"

"Exactly what he wants to do. But how?"

"They have a certain market value, I presume?"

A smile flits across the broker's face, such as an indulgent parent might wear at the ingenuous prattle of a child.

"Yes. I will show you."

He takes down a file of Stock Exchange lists from the wall and throws back the stiff cover.

"Esmeralda Silver Mining Company, the first of January, one and a quarter to one and a half. No transactions. January 2nd, one transaction at one and three eighths."

"Only one pound seven shillings and six pence for a ten-pound share?" cries Darrell.

"Exactly. It is a terrible depreciation. With the first report of ill luck, at the time these shares stood at a premium, there were great fluctuations. Ups and downs you know, according to telegrams received, but with a violent

downward tendency. Of late prices have been quite steady—all this year they have kept pretty evenly at one and a quarter. February 5th, you see, one and a quarter, one and three eighths, one and five sixteenths. March 1st, one and a quarter to one and a half. No transactions. April 7th, one and a quarter. May 5th, one and three eighths. Yesterday's list, one and a quarter. But what think you would be the result if our financing friend took his five thousand shares into an open market and offered them?"

"I cannot say."

"There would be a little panic. Other mines would fall, slightly, in sympathy, but 'Esmeralda' shares would go to nothing—literally nothing, and he would hardly get thanks if he offered to give them away."

"What will he do then?"

"He would prefer to borrow upon them, that when the mine begins to pay he may reap the advantage. But that is impossible. No one would lend upon such security. The only thing is to sell the lot at a ruinous sacrifice to a capitalist, and this letter begs me to find a purchaser, as money must be raised somehow."

"Does he quote a price?"

"No. But his immediate pecuniary requirements are above five thousand pounds, and I dare say that after much haggling he would take that sum for the shares. One thousand two hundred and fifty pounds less than present market value, that is, or five years' interest at five per cent. on the investment. At such a price, regarding present market value as a fair one, an investor could afford to wait five years for the first dividend. Should payments be resumed meanwhile, as doubtless they will be if no fresh hitch occur, there is no reason why the shares should not rise steadily until they reach par. In that case the man who bought five thousand pounds' worth might quietly realise fifty thousand pounds."

"You take away one's breath. With such an auriferous possibility before his eyes how can your financier make up his mind to sell?"

"My dear sir, you overlook two eventualities. One, that funds may never be forthcoming to pump the mine dry; another, that five years may be spent in raising the money and expelling the water. In five years the present holder, with all his gigantic speculations, will have made or lost a million of money. He may be the richest commoner in England, or a pauper."

"I feel strongly tempted to purchase."

The broker examines intently an ink spot on the carpet, perhaps that the satisfaction in his eyes may not show too plainly.

"The very thing I feared, after that indiscreet exclamation of mine. Ah, me! ah, me!" (and his head wags solemnly above the white neckcloth). "Young heads are very rash, very rash, my dear sir."

"Then you would not feel tempted personally?"

"I? I would not touch a risky thing with a long pole. It is not my métier, my character would suffer."

"Yet you have a good opinion of the mine," says St. John, smiling.

The broker's face exhibits signs of distress.

"Mr. Darrell, what can I have given you that impression? I have committed myself to no opinion. I have tried to be most guarded in the statements which you wrung from me under plea of a special favour to yourself. I have tried to show that present unfairness in the matter of dividend and possible loss of every penny sunk in the speculation have to be weighed against dazzling but most uncertain possibilities. Yet you assert I have a good opinion of the mine."

"An assertion to which you give no denial."

The broker's distress changes to comical perplexity.

"You are too much for me," he says. "You have me in a corner; the only chance is to make a bold spring and get away. Here are various papers" (pulling open a drawer and taking from a compartment marked "E" a bundle of documents tied with tape) "which will enable you to trace in detail the vicissitudes I have briefly sketched. Read them at your

leisure. I allured it to seize it."

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leisure. I can only hope that if you are still allured by the tempting bait, the opportunity to seize it may be lost."

"I shall read them in the course of the next three hours, for they will help to beguile the tediousness of a journey by rail, and I shall telegraph to you my decision as soon as it is made. Meanwhile kindly hold the bank notes on my behalf."

"Well, well," says the broker, smiling, "'a wilful man must have his own way.' That proverb should be spoken in the broadest Gaelic, I fancy, for it comes from the 'land o' cakes,' but I am no canny Scotsman, and should make a mull of the pronunciation. I wish you good day and a pleasant journey."

So the fly gets into his hansom and drives to the terminus, unconscious of the gossamer threads which have been wound so cunningly about his wings, and the spider goes back to his den, there to spin fresh meshes for fresh victims.

Later in the day, before the process is complete, a yellow-enveloped missive is brought him.

"I am willing to give five thousand pounds for the shares. You may enter upon the necessary negotiations."

The letter in sprawling caligraphy still lies before him unanswered. He takes it up and reads it once more with careful attention.

"DEAR SPIDER.—It is all 'U P' with Esmeralda mine. I learn by private telegram that Hackett, the old engineer, says nothing more can be done, and has thrown up his appointment in disgust. There is some talk of allowing a young Scotch fellow, his subordinate, to try some ridiculous scheme which he says will work—probably a dodge of the Scotchman to get promotion and bigger screw for a few months, as stepping-stones to a better thing."

"The matter will be kept dark for a week pending board meeting, then prices will drop to the devil, that is—nil. I have burnt my fingers nicely, have I not?"

"Do you know anybody with more money than brains who would be tempted to buy my big holding privately at considerably less than ruling prices?"

"Invent any cock-and-bull story you like to account for extreme hurry in concluding sale. The money must be paid over and the transfer of shares registered in a week. I am at my wife's end. Help me in this and I will put something good in your way shortly."

The broker lights a taper he is accustomed to use for igniting sealing-wax and holds the letter to it until only a heap of ashes remains. Then he draws pen and paper to him, and writes:

"I am in a position to place the Esmeralda shares at fifteen shillings each. The difference between buying and selling prices to be regarded as my commission. Wire reply, and the purchase money shall be lodged to-morrow with your bankers."

The note is addressed, sealed, and marked "Private and confidential" by the spider's own fat hands.

He steps into the neat brougham in waiting, and is whirled rapidly to the luxurious home where Mrs. Spider and the girls await him, gorgeously arrayed and feverishly impatient lest "Pa" should make them late for Exeter Hall.

To-night there will be a crowded meeting at that famous building in aid of foreign missions. The spider will be honoured with a seat upon the platform, enthusiastic strangers and mild curates from the country will regard him with reverence as a colonial bishop, at least. The chairman will almost embrace him on receipt of the cheque for one hundred pounds with which the spider's "large-hearted Christian charity" prompts him to begin the collection; a contribution which will be published by the daily papers through the length and breadth of England and prove one of the cheapest advertisements ever circulated.

And as the broker's head sinks on the pillow, and he composes himself to virtuous slumber,

it is with the generous glow at his heart a good action inspires. He feels he has done his duty in that state of life in which it has pleased Providence to place him, and he murmurs, drowsily:

"Five shillings per share. Five thousand shares. Twelve hundred and fifty pounds. Not a bad day's work."

CHAPTER XII.

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

Just like prizefighters in a fair;
Who first shake hands before they box,
Then give each other plucky knocks
With all the loving kindness of a brother.

"You are my brother's murderer!"

The words burn into Mostyn Howard's brain as the expression of that horrible fear which he has tried to put from him. They swim in letters of fire before his eyes, and shut out for a moment the livid, upturned face. They ring in his ears and deafen him to the wild reproaches by which the agitated girl enforces them.

He kneels, and with trembling fingers essays to unfasten the prostrate lad's neck-cloth, to loosen the shirt at his throat.

The gentle rain has moistened the clotted blood. Lady Clare wipes it away tenderly with a little useless square of handkerchief, and the white face looks somewhat less ghastly—indeed Mostyn Howard's is almost the paler of the two.

"Do not touch him," she cries, with superstitious terror. "A corpse will bleed again beneath the murderer's fingers. Look!"

Blood has recommenced flowing from the nostrils. To Mostyn the sight is one of hopeful joy. No serious mischief can be done surely since the circulation still continues.

The stable helper comes rushing up with a can of water, and the tutor finds a tongue.

"Your brother is only stunned, Lady Clare. If you will let me dash a little water in his face he will revive. Let me hold his head or your dress will be soaked."

"My dress!" she repeats, with superb scorn. "Give me the water."

She dips tiny brown hands to the wrists in the vessel and sprinkles a shower of drops upon Lord Ferrars's face. She laves his forehead and wets his hair with the cool water, and the heavy eyelids unclose.

He sighs heavily, as though still somewhat bewildered. Another dash of water recalls the wandering senses.

"Hallo! Clare. What the deuce are you making me in that beastly mess for?"

"I thought you were dead, dear."

"Then the sooner you disabuse yourself the better. Next time you imagine your brother defunct shed a few tears over him if you like, but not a bucket of water. How did I come here? Mr. Howard, how white you look about the gills. What is the matter? Have you over-exerted yourself? You must have hit out pretty forcibly that last left-hander to knock me into this condition."

"Your head struck the wall as you fell," explains Mostyn. "Thank God you are not more seriously hurt."

Lord Ferrars rises to his feet, putting both hands to the back of his head.

"That is why my cranium aches so infernally, I suppose. It feels as big as two, and as heavy as lead. Jim, you lazy beggar, pull off those gloves; I have had enough for to-day. Mr. Howard, we must indulge in a little gentle play to-morrow, if you will. You are more than my master, and I shall be proud to learn from you."

"Mr. Howard will doubtless be happy to administer another brutal lesson," exclaims Lady Clare, with flashing eyes.

"Clare, you are a little fool," retorts her brother. "Go and take off that sloppy dress, and make yourself presentable. You look like Dorothy Draggetail. Will you shake hands, Mr. Howard? I don't mind owning I richly deserve all I got."

With tears in his eyes, the tutor extends his hand. The lad's frank manliness has surprised and touched him; he is almost speechless with emotion. Lord Ferrars observes it. Master and pupil are very near friend-ship for a moment.

"On my word, Howard, I begin to think you are an uncommonly decent fellow."

Before Mostyn can reply Lady Clare's sarcastic voice interposes.

"What sound discrimination! An uncommonly decent fellow, forsooth, because he bore insult, biding his time to humiliate you in that one pastime at which you deem yourself an adept. Because he planned to chastise you as thoroughly as any beaten hound or whipped schoolboy. Because he shamed you before your own stable helper, and repented of his work only when he thought revenge had been carried so far that his own safety was endangered. An uncommonly decent fellow, verily."

"I do not care," mutters her brother, sullenly. "He is the best pugilist I ever met."

"And what is his opinion of the green country lad who baited a trap and set his own foot in it? Come here," she continues, vindictively, drawing him away, "come here, and I will tell you."

With sad, dejected eyes Mostyn watches the retreating figures. For the young nobleman's intractability of temper, for his perverse and determined opposition, for a long and patient fight against prejudice and obstinacy, he was prepared. Having planned the campaign, as it were, he had begun to carry it, step by step, to a victorious termination.

But this young girl's enmity and dangerous influence are new features in the warfare. They surprise and disconcert him.

Henceforth he must set himself to win both sister and brother, and the task is doubly difficult, by reason of the difference in their temperaments.

The boxing encounter has thrown a new light upon Lord Ferrars's character. With all his faults, there is a rough but generous manliness about the lad, which would promise well for the future could it only be developed.

The master has won the pupil's respect now. Respect that trembled for a moment upon the verge of liking, but that may oscillate to the opposite sentiment under the insinuations of keen girlish malice.

Clearly the sister must be won first—but how?

All his life Mostyn Howard has been an eager student of masculine character, but his opportunities of observing women have been few and far between.

"The proper study of mankind is man." It is a truth upon which he has possibly placed limited and one-sided construction.

And this young girl is to him an inscrutable mystery.

Jim, the helper, has touched his apology for a hat, and has retired grinning, carrying the gloves with him.

Lord Ferrars and his sister, talking earnestly, have vanished through a side door.

Mostyn stands upon the threshold of the out-building, and tries to think out the problem to the drip, drip of the rain.

He recalls her as she chose to appear at their first meeting—a merry, joyous child of "larger growth," treating him with a frank camaraderie that was as pleasant as it was startling.

Then he sees her advancing with stately steps, with a distant, frigid bow, in acknowledgment of a distasteful introduction. Faultlessly attired, haughty as a queen, graceful as a fawn, beautiful as a horri, she is his Lady Clare, every inch a peer's daughter.

And within the last few minutes she has shown in another mood. A mood of vehement, indignant passion, of fierce, upbraiding scorn, of determined and malignant revenge, if he rightly interpreted the parting glances she threw to him.

She is a paradox, a puzzle, an enigma it will need all his penetration to solve.

And when he has learned the keynote of her character, when he can trace the difficult tran-

sitions and obscure passages, when he can grope his way through bewildering discords into exquisite harmony—what then?

Music perhaps of thrilling power and wondrous sweetness. Music which might possibly avail to lull and soothe his madness of memory as David's harp soothed the madness of Saul the King.

How beautiful she is in all her moods!

He falls to wondering of what further changes of expression her features are capable. Abandonment, disdain, anger, scorn, revenge, all these he has seen.

He has the imagination of a poet and an artist, this Mostyn Howard. He is one of those who see visions and dream dreams. An imaginary picture rises at this moment.

The proud eyes are softened to liquid tenderness; the lines of the mouth (lines that he has just beheld hardened in contemptuous derision) tremble into infinite sweetness. The lovely face is glorified, transfigured. It bears the impress of a great passion; it turns fearfully to the mystery and the glamour of a new existence.

The picture fades, just as he longs, with an artist's longing, to transfer it to canvas. Before him are shiny slate roofs, wet grass, dripping branches. With a sigh he waits for the rain to fall less heavily that he may return to his own rooms.

It does not once occur to him the ideal face which stood out in a brief day-dream may haunt him in the future.

Already his life is haunted.

Haunted by the ghost of a terrible memory which points menacingly at him across the years.

A ghost that never slumbers, that never vanishes altogether. A ghost that fades and pales sometimes, but at others stands out so clearly he wonders no one can see it but himself.

Not for him the peaceful, contented life of other men, the hopeful labour, the restful ease, the love of fair women—the household gods whom they worship in innocent idolatry.

His existence must be one of solitary self-sacrifice, of never-ceasing atonement.

The one great hope which he connects with the future is that he may at some distant date have done a little good, have earned a little fame.

The one great fear, a fear which gives him ever a stern, sad gravity beyond his years, is that the good he may have done, the fame he may have earned, will be alike powerless to save him from the pointing finger and the savage malediction of society.

And if ever the day come when the good and evil of his career are weighed in the balance he must stand alone, awaiting the decision. No woman's eye must dilate with the agony of suspense, no tender woman's heart must be racked with sympathetic suffering. Monkish vow was never more binding than is his resolve in this particular.

There is a brief lull in the steady downpouring of water, and he mechanically takes advantage of it to regain the castle. It is in his mind to seek Lord Malbreckthane, to lay before him the events of the morning, and to suggest the expediency of abandoning a struggle so painful in its continuance.

Gradually as he walks there boom upon him the deep tones of an organ. Louder and louder they grow until all the exquisite harmony of one of Mozart's Masses steals soothingly into his soul. He passes into the great hall and sits down unnoticed in a corner.

His ears drink in the music, his eyes wander from trophies of war and peace which deceased Darrells have hung upon the walls, to the glories of the painted window whereon their arms are emblazoned, in blue and crimson and gold, and to that simple legend—"Dare ell, dare all."

There is the head of a buffalo, surrounded by tomahawks and Indian arrows. There are stag's antlers, old English longbows, shirts of mail, swords, daggers, maces, tattered flags. And just where golden light streams through the stained window sits Blanche Carew at the organ, like

some fair saint with a halo about her brow, fixing rapt, intent eyes upon the score before her.

He looks and listens, looks long and earnestly at the exquisite profile of that lovely face so full of sweetness, goodness, purity, listens to the throbbing and the wailing of the organ, to the strife and the clamour, to the triumphant march of rich closing chords. A measure of calmness and of peace comes to him.

There is a quick, firm step in the hall, and the earl appears, an open telegram in his hand. He wears a loose suit of white cricketing flannels, a garb he has greatly affected since the hot weather first set in.

"Where is your mother, Blanche?"

"In her boudoir, I think. No bad news I hope."

"Just like the women," grumbles the earl, "they never see a telegram but they think there is sickness or death in the envelope. St. John Darrell will be here to dinner, that is all."

Miss Carew wheels round again to the organ somewhat abruptly. Lord Malbreckthane's footfall dies upon the soft carpet of the staircase. Mostyn Howard, watching the musician from his corner, sees a vivid blush spread from the centre of the cheek turned towards him, until it dyes white forehead and snowy throat even a deep crimson. As though to cool the hot brow the fair head sinks until it rests upon the ivory keys, but there is an indefinable something in the action which seems almost a caress, and Mostyn rises noiselessly to his feet and creeps unobserved away, feeling guiltily he has been betrayed into involuntary espionage.

At the top of the stairs he meets the earl.

"Ah! Mr. Howard, you look very hot. What have you been doing?"

"Come to my rooms for a few minutes and I will tell you, my lord," says the tutor, gravely.

Lord Malbreckthane puts his own construction upon the gravity.

"I suppose that young scamp Ferrars has been annoying you again. Never mind, never mind. In time you will tame him, I am sure. One of these days you must give him a severe lesson, you know."

A faint smile plays about the tutor's lips as he pushes his luxurious easy chair towards the earl and takes a small one himself.

"The severe lesson has just been administered."

"Eh? What?"

"I have just been boxing with Lord Ferrars, and have given him the most thorough punishment, probably, he ever received."

"You don't say so," cries the earl, ecstatically. "With the gloves too? Why, he thought not a man in the county could touch him, I am sure."

"Then he is probably disillusioned at this moment," rejoins Mostyn, gloomily. "But, my lord, it was no child's play to beat him, and the victory was likely to have cost me dear."

"It was a kind of fight at the end, I suppose. By Jove! I would like to have seen it. The lad fought well, I hope? I should be sorry to think the Darrell pluck had died out."

"You need feel no alarm upon that score. We should be at it still, I fear, but that an unlucky blow took him off his legs, and in falling his head struck the wall. My lord, for some minutes I feared he was dead."

At the recollection of his agony of mind during those minutes the tutor's voice trembles, and great beads of perspiration stand out upon his forehead. Lord Malbreckthane interposes with kindly derision.

"There, there, you might have known Ferrars's skull was too thick to be hurt seriously. I am very glad indeed."

"I feared he was dead," repeats Mostyn. "In the horror of the moment I bitterly repented my rashness in undertaking his reformation. In the glow of joyful relief which succeeded I almost resolved to abandon the task."

"Heaven forbid," exclaims the earl, devoutly. "What did the boy say when he came to his senses? He was stunned, I presume?"

"Yes. He complimented me, shook hands in the most friendly way, and suggested a little

mild sparring to-morrow. I cannot tell you how much his frankness and manliness touched me."

"Yet you contemplate leaving him to certain ruin, just when you have probably secured both respect and liking?"

"I did indeed think his feeling towards me was on the verge of change, but the hope was speedily dashed to the ground. I have one implacable enemy in this house—Lord Malbreckthane—whose influence more than nullifies mine."

"An enemy? Who?"

"Lady Clare."

"Clare? The little fire-brand! How have you offended her?"

"I am utterly at a loss to imagine, but the fact remains."

"Well, do not let a woman's opposition daunt you. Try to make friends with the little vixen. If that policy will not work invite her to put on the gloves once or twice. And as for Ferrars—Bless my soul, what's that?"

That is the obstinate adhesion of the earl's coat and nether garments to the chair in which he has been sitting, so that it is lifted bodily from the floor as he rises to depart.

"I fear," says Mostyn, smiling, "your lordship is the victim of a practical joke intended for my benefit. The enemy has recovered quickly from recent reverses, and his force is strengthened by a formidable ally."

"Ferrars and Clare?" asks the earl, dismally, trying to get a back view of certain sticky discolorations painfully conspicuous upon the white flannels. "On the warpath again, are they? Confound them both!"

"You were about to make a remark respecting the former. 'As for Ferrars,' you began."

"Oh! As for Ferrars, break his neck if you like. I will forgive you," and my lord of Malbreckthane goes off in a huff to change his attire, muttering anathemas upon the culprits until he is out of hearing.

The principal subject of his objurgations is at that moment strolling, cigar in mouth, towards the stables. The rain has ceased, the sun crawls from behind a heavy bank of dark clouds. There is promise of a fine afternoon.

Lord Ferrars is conscious of a half-closed sensation about the eyes, and a general feeling of soreness and puffiness about the cheeks. Also of strong disinclination to join the rest of the family at luncheon.

Having inspected the stables and held fifteen minutes' learned conversation with the grooms he lights another weed, and strolls listlessly down the avenue. He walks on and on until he has almost reached the lodge gates, when he sees a slim figure coming towards him.

Inordinate appreciation of female society is at no time the young nobleman's besetting weakness. Just now it is peculiarly distasteful.

He swears a little and stops at a by-path, intending to turn down it as soon as faint curiosity respecting the visitor's identity shall be satisfied.

She is a slight, trim-looking lassie in the distance, walking with quick, elastic tread. Suddenly his face clears, and he advances joyfully to meet her.

"Clara! You here?"

She drops him a saucy little courtesy and bestows a bright smile of recognition.

"Yes, my lord."

"Coming back again?" he inquires, eagerly.

A shake of the head.

Lord Ferrars's countenance falls.

"Turn down this path with me for a minute or two, out of the sight of that old fool at the lodge, or there will be more food for gossiping tongues."

"But, my lord—"

"But me no buts." And his arm steals round her waist and draws her into the narrow beaten track. There is only room for one to walk abreast, and her fingers make a pretence of trying to disengage his hold, but he retains it, striding over bushes and underwood that would bar his progress.

"For shame, my lord! Leave loose of my waist! Leave loose, I say!"

With a spring she escapes and runs gleefully forward a few yards. A felled tree bars further progress.

"I will not go another step," she cries, seating herself. "What do you want with me, my lord? No," as his arm approaches again. "Keep your distance."

"I want to know why you left Lord Malbreckthane's service for Lady Jocelyn's."

"To better myself. I get five pounds a year more, my lord."

"Bosh! I would have given you the five pounds myself. The sight of your pretty face about the house for a year would be well worth it, Clara."

"Thank you for nothing, my lord. What would people say, do you think, if they knew a poor girl had taken a bank-note from a young nobleman?"

"Say? Mischievous enough—curse their prating tongues!"

"Amen—and A—a—men," sings Clara Markham, carelessly.

"But, Clara—"

"But, my lord."

"They need not know. If you want money come back again, and you shall sell me a kiss for a sovereign as often as you like."

They are sitting side by side now upon the fallen tree, with their faces to the path by which they have come. In the rear is a small space cleared by trees, and open, save for the thick furze-bushes. From behind an oak a ruddy, fierce face is thrust forth, and savage eyes glare at them across the gorge.

"I don't sell my kisses, Lord Ferrars, and I don't want your sovereigns."

The lad's arm is stealing round the slim waist again. Her fingers, which make believe to thrust it away, get intertwined with his own. The ruddy face of the watcher pales visibly.

"Clara!"

"My lord!" The girl turns upon him a sly, coquettish glance, then drops her eyes demurely. Well enough she knows that look has sent the hot blood coursing through his veins like molten lead. A born coquette is Clara Markham.

"If you do not sell your kisses you give them away sometimes. May I not have one?"

A vigorous shake of the head is her reply.

"Not one? I beg it of you, Clara. When an earl's son humbles himself to beg will you refuse?"

The hand which imprisons her fingers transfers them to its fellow; the arm which encircles her waist ascends to her neck and gently forces the face towards him till their eyes meet—his full of eager longing, hers of gratified vanity.

The young man, watching from behind the oak, forgets in his excitement to be cautious, and steps out a pace or two from the place of concealment. The low tones of the unconscious pair are but an indistinct murmur in his ears, but the fierce eyes note every caressing touch and gesture with tiger-like vigilance.

"Let me go, my lord," she says, with a sudden change of mood. "You are only amusing yourself with a poor girl. You do not want her kisses. Leave loose!"

"I want them more than anything in the world," he cries, impetuously. "Clara, you must—"

The sentence remains unfinished, unless the pressure of the young nobleman's lips on the red ones so temptingly within reach be a continuation of it.

The sight is too much for the observer's equanimity. He has no eyes for the broad belt of thick gorse between himself and the lovers; no thought but to arrest the passionate kisses snatched from the yielding fair, one or to exact a terrible vengeance.

With that fixed, savage glare in his eyes increased to ten-fold ferocity, and clutching his heavy stick with firmer grip, the young man plunges forward and comes crashing down upon his face amongst the furze-bushes.

"A spy!" exclaims the startled girl, scornfully. "Get up, Mr. Sneak-in-the-grass!"

Reuben Holt lifts his scratched and bleeding face. Distorted as it is with passion something

is written there at sight of which her scorn changes to shame and sorrow.

"A sneak, am I? Shall I call names too, Miss Light-o'-love?"

Awaiting no answer he turns, and with quick steps disappears amongst the trees.

"That fellow is one of the gang of poachers, I am sure," cries Lord Ferrars, excitedly.

"What is his name, Clara?"

"Never mind his name, my lord. He is an honest man than yourself. Don't try to follow me. If you do I will never speak to you again."

At a quick run she regains the drive, and Lord Ferrars is left sitting alone upon the felled tree and speechless with amazement.

(To be Continued.)

FACETIÆ.

TO SIR WILFRID LAWSON.

"THE best name for a firm of wine-merchants that I ever heard of," observed an eminent teetotaler, "is Wisdom and Warter."

An Irish gentleman remarked that there must be some mistake in the second syllable of the first name, which ought to be "key."

Punch.

AN ULTIMATUM.

CABBY (master of the situation): "Take up your master at Cavell's Square? Now, look ere, your gov'nor'll hev to come himself—and tell me where he want to go, an' he can make me a hoffer."

Punch.

THE LOWEST DEPTH.

THROWING down crumbs for the frozen-out birds in order that you may see your cat catch them.

Punch.

JUST SO.

SOLICITORS, as everybody knows, are fond of "crooked cases," but why is it that barristers find it almost impossible to be straightforward?—Why, because, don't you see, they are always going on circuit.

Judy.

"TROUBLED WATERS."—Where fishery disputes begin.

Judy.

ZEAL FOR THE SERVICE.

COLONEL: "Drunk, eh? Very bad beginning for a young soldier! What have you to say for yourself?"

RECRUIT (deprecatingly): "Very sorry, colonel, anxious to pass out of awkward squad—took to practise facings by m'self—did right about too much—got giddy—'bliged to take little drop, sir—restore 'quill' br'um."

[The colonel, who doesn't see the validity of the excuse, sentences him to twenty-eight days' extra drill with confinement to barracks.]

Judy.

GET OUT!

WHAT is the difference between the telephone and a person taken in by the confidence trick?

—Why, one is simply marvellous, while the other is marvellously simple.

Judy.

PLOTS OF LAND.—Those originating in Ireland.

Judy.

WHAT is the difference between Noah's Ark and Joan of Arc?—One was made of gopher wood, and the other was Maid of Orleans.

Judy.

SEASONABLE SUGGESTIONS.

THE weather is invariably a favourite theme of conversation with Englishmen, but lately it has especially been "an ice" topic.

If someone remarks that he thinks the frost is "breaking up," immediately reply, "Yes, it's 'school' though," and then assume a thwartful expression.

Should anyone want to know your opinion of the weather, say you should not be surprised if it were to get warmer "by degrees."

One of the leading theatres announced that it closed in consequence of the inclement weather. This was superfluous; the closing of a theatre is generally associated with a "frost." Fun.

DISENCHANTMENT.

A STYLPH-LIKE symmetry of shape,
A waist a wasp would die for,
A step so airy that e'en a fairy
Its ownership would sigh for.

A Hebe-haughtiness of head,
An ankle (this between us),
A hand, glove-cased, that would have
graced
The De Medici Venus.

All this with ecstasy I mark,
And haste my steps till able
Her face to see—ah, woe is me!
A negress black as sable!

Judy.

A PRIZE RACE.

SCENE—On the ice.

BELLA: "Now, Sandy, will you take me for a race round?"

SANDY: "For a race round? Oh, yes, if you'll be the prize, should I win." Fun.

THE sets ladies are always to be found in.—Corsets. Moonshine.

THE CAUSE OF CHARITY.

RETIRED MERCHANT (to seedy party): "You're a schemer, sir; you tell my servant you want to see me on business, and when I come to you you beg."

RESPECTABLE MENDICANT: "Well, yer needn't get so red in the face about it. Begging is my business, ain't it?" Moonshine.

FAIR PURCHASER: "Have you any butter—pure butter, upon your honour?"

MR. POTTS: "Well, as you put it to me that way, mem, I'm afraid I must say I haven't. The butter's adulterated with oleomargarine, I'm told."

F. P.: "Then I'll try the oleomargarine alone. They say in the House 'tis perfectly wholesome."

MR. P.: "Well, mem, there you have me again. The oleomargarine would be wholesome only it's adulterated with butter, you know." Moonshine.

A SAD CASE.

WE understand that the benches in the House of Commons, upon which the Members of Parliament nightly disport themselves, are now to be seen in a gasping and almost dying condition. This is the direct result of the cruel policy of the Land Leaguers, who deliberately determined to exhaust all the forms of the House before allowing Mr. Forster's Coercion Bill to pass.

Moonshine.

QUERIES BY A QUIBBLER.

IF a coiner were sentenced to be hanged, would Marwood provide a mint-drop?

Is the clerk of the weather known as the rain-beau?

Do gamblers, when "wanted," invariably "cut for Deal?"

Did Gale wind up his walk with a hurry-cane?

Do billiard players lose their heads in a whirl-pool?

Is it feasible to shoot wild rabbit with a hare gun?

Moonshine.

GETTING STOUT.—Fetching a quart.

Moonshine.

A TEARFUL TASK.—Peeling onions.

Moonshine.

THE jest that brings disagreeable consequences.—Indi-jest-ion.

Moonshine.

CONCLUSIVE.

ALDERMAN TOPER: "You won't take a glass of wine?"

MR. SIMPLESWEET: "My dear sir, I never drank a glass of wine in my life."

A. T.: "Ah, my dear boy, that's just like me. I never drink less than a bottle." Moonshine.

BY OUR OWN UNDERTAKER.

CONSIDERING the conflicting nature of the evidence in connection with the State trials in Dublin, would it not be more accurate to term them the "lying-in-State" trials?

Funny Folks.

CORPORATION MEASURE.

Five hard frosts make one fall of snow.
Three falls of snow make one street impassable.

Six hundred streets impassable make one newspaper leader.

Twenty newspaper leaders make one public howl.

Five thousand public howls don't make one municipal government move. Punch.

ADAPTED QUOTATION.

LAST WEEK'S WINTER (LOQUITUR).—"My name is Ab-normal on the Primrose Hill," Punch.

NOTHING LIKE BEING CORRECT.

PEDLAR: "Mornin', Mr. Waggle. Hinjoyn' yer morning pipe hafter last night's storm? I heard you and your wife havin' high words, as I passed at twelve o'clock."

MR. WAGGLES (a reprobate): "High words, was it?—more like low langwidge, I calls it." Fun.

IN THREE ACTS.

ACT I.

THERE were noise and confusion all about, and no wonder, for the "great dramatic spectacle," as it was called in the bills, was getting itself set in order for the purpose of making a grand display before an audience of some thousands.

A melancholy-looking man dressed as Mephistopheles was standing leaning against one of the side-scenes.

"Poor old Christopher," said one of the subordinates, turning to a pretty girl, who was to play the part of one of the sylphs, "he takes it harder than she does. He's been in love with her himself I've always believed, even while he played the part of a father to her. Yes! through all these years when he hardly had a crown for himself, and gave that crown to her, he's loved her in secret, though he never, I dare say, breathed a word of it."

"Shows his good sense," answered the girl, flippantly. "Nobody would look twice at such a fellow. He's the ugliest man I ever saw."

"He may be all that," replied the man, "and yet as good as gold. Do you know how he first came to know Columbine? We generally call her Columbine, you see; sometimes Rita; but never Miss Meredith."

"No. I'm but new here. Though I've always heard it was a romantic story."

"Well, he took her a tiny infant and orphan from her dead mother's arms, when the mother, whom nobody knew then, was found lying by the road-side. There was nobody to care for the child, and she'd have been sent to the poor-house but for him. Since that day he has lived only for Columbine, and many a time when his luck's been down on him he has gone without bread in order that she might not starve."

Even the thoughtless listener was touched by this story. She looked, reflectively, at the old actor and said:

"He isn't so ugly after all. And you say he takes this conduct of Rudolf's hard."

"Yes, harder than she does. You see, he loved her so. I think he could almost murder the faithless lover. It was a cruel blow I've no doubt to poor old Cris, when he first found that Columbine was in love with this handsome genius, half-poet, half-painter; but he braced himself up to it I suppose, telling himself he couldn't expect youth to love middle age; and as Rudolf after all was rather a good sort of fellow, he gave his consent to the marriage, which was only put off till the young people could afford it. But now since this Polish princess has come to the fore and smiles on Rudolf, and they do say is even willing to marry him, and he has lost his head and

neglects Columbine—why, old Cris is ready to murder the youngster almost, and yet is breaking his own heart in pity for poor little Columbine."

"I don't wonder," said his companion, with a sigh.

"But I shouldn't wonder," continued the other, "if they were all worrying themselves without cause. For my part I don't believe Rudolf will live long to trouble any of them; he has a horrid cough this winter; and since the princess has come, and he's been running after her so much, he's neglected it you see, and it's getting worse day by day."

"Poor Columbine," sighed the other. "But see, here she comes."

A slight, graceful girl, dressed for the part of Columbine, emerged from the dressing-room as the girl spoke and advanced towards the melancholy old actor. The two speakers drew back and subsided into silence as she passed.

"I suppose you are looking for Rudolf," said the old actor as Columbine joined him; and when she did not answer he added: "Of course you are!"

He spoke with as much acrimony as if convicting her of having denied his first statement.

The girl looked up, deprecatingly.

"I—I only wanted to be sure he had his overcoat on, it's so cold here to-night, and he's not strong yet," she said, meekly, and with a sort of apology in her plaintive voice.

The other laughed bitterly. But the bitterness was as nothing compared to the pain which sounded through his false merriment.

"You needn't laugh at me," continued Columbine, with a little injured note audible in her tones. "He isn't strong, and it's very, very cold," and she shivered from her bare shoulders to her thinly-covered ankles.

"He's got something here," said the other, laying his hand on his own black and scarlet breast, "which is warmer than a great-coat. But if he doesn't take care he'll find it burn worse than the shirt of Nessus."

The girl made no reply; but only sighed more wearily than before.

"Why don't you ask me where Rudolf is?" demanded the other, testily, after a pause.

Columbine roused herself with a start, and looked inquiringly at him. He repeated his question, with added acerbity.

"Because—because you're so cross," she faltered.

"Because you know where he is, and want to persuade yourself that you don't," he retorted, triumphantly.

But she turned on him at his words with such a pathetic, complaining look in her eyes that he added, hastily, with a kind of a groan:

"I'm a brute to torment you! Forgive me."

Columbine turned away for an instant. Then she looked back at him. He seemed so penitent and ashamed that she laid one trembling hand on his arm, and said, softly:

"You're such a good old Christopher—don't mind me!"

This time the poor fellow gave egress to a sob, without any attempt to smother or disguise it. But before Columbine could speak another word he was called and had to go upon the stage, leaving her standing there waiting her turn.

For some seconds Columbine remained quite still by the narrow slit which led upon the stage, as tired, sad, and hopeless looking a little Columbine as ever lived.

She roused up at last from her dismal reverie and hurried down the stage to the great curtain that served for a drop-scene.

An iron weight held the heavy roller a little back so that by pressing close to the proscenium a curious dweller behind the drop-scene could catch a glimpse of the vast horse shoe packed from pit to dome with careless, laughing people.

A man stood peering out across the footlights towards a stage-box at the opposite end—a tall, lithe, young, handsome man, bareheaded, with

a wreath of curls, glittering like spun gold in the glare of the lamps.

When Columbine perceived him she stopped short, lifted her hand to her bosom and held it there as if something hurt suddenly under her gay silken vest, her breath coming and going in quick, convulsive gasps.

When she could control herself again she moved cautiously on till she stood close behind the watcher, who remained too deeply absorbed to notice her presence.

Scooping so as to look out from under his arm, Columbine stared also at the gorgeously decorated stage-box until her very eyes grew hot and blurred and all objects floated and disappeared in a fiery mist, which surged slowly back and forth before her sight.

She had known in advance what and whom she was to see. Yet with the strange craving for self-torture which is one of the strangest traits among all those untold inconsistencies which make up human character she could not resist stabbing her heart and stinging her soul by that long, eager glance.

She had seen a woman seated in the gilt-backed arm-chair, dressed in soft, dead-white draperies, a scarlet, burnous flung carelessly over her shoulders, a single diamond crescent glittering and flashing in her hair.

This woman was sitting perfectly motionless. No one person in a hundred could have preserved such utter immobility. One arm was resting on her knee, the other was hanging at her side.

A second lady occupied a seat near, and several men were grouped about. There were laughter and conversation; but she at whom Columbine had looked for some moments paid no attention to either.

Then suddenly she lifted her eyes to the face of one of the speakers and let a slow smile gradually brighten her mouth.

Oh, that smile! Circe might have had such a smile and such eyes. Few men could have resisted their spell.

And yet, and yet—was she beautiful? Watching her, a few minutes before, a critical observer might have said she appeared inanimate, that the features were too coldly regular, the complexion too pale.

But after meeting with the glory of her smiling lips and eyes few could judge. Either the spectator would become hopeless intoxicated or else he would conceive a repulsion so powerful that he would no more have given a second glance than if he had been chilled to the marrow by the unexpected sight of a death's head set on those perfect shoulders.

A wanderer familiar with foreign lands would unhesitatingly have pronounced as to her nationality.

None but a Polish woman ever looked like that. Did you ever hear this legend? This is what the men in Poland tell you, and though they laugh as they relate it, they shiver under their own merriment, as people do while repeating some superstitious tale which they desire to convince themselves does not affect their judgment.

When the gods grew so weary of each other that they wanted something new to torment they made men, and having done this they discovered that in order to torture him to the full extent of their capacities the female of his species was required—so they set to work.

The German woman proved too dull, the English woman too scrupulous, the French woman too frivolous, the Italian too astute, so they took sunshine and snow, roses and deadly poison, grace and cruelty, intellect and avarice, poetry and evil desire, ambition and sloth, things and qualities most opposed each to the other, and flung the whole into the fiery crucible which held the eternal principle of life—and up sprang the Pole!

The gods shrank back with a shudder at the sight of their own work. They had created a something, half angel, half demon, something unequalled, incomparable, a Polish woman. This is the legend the cynical in Poland tell.

And looking at Olga Daniski, and listening to the legend, one who knew her well not only was

ready to believe the fable but to say that she, in her own person, had been the original of the Olympian toilers' handiwork.

Seconds, minutes elapsed. Yet still the watcher at the opposite side of the stage did not stir.

Still Columbine watched till the blindness and faintness which came over her broke the dreadful fascination that had bound her to the spot.

Then she gathered up the remnants of her strength, and slowly moved away. But she had not moved quickly enough.

Her head was so dizzy, and her eyes so blurred, that she had scarcely shrunk back three paces when she stumbled against a heap of theatrical lumber, and a portion of it fell to the floor with a crash, bruising Columbine's shoulder cruelly.

The racket was loud enough to rouse her fellow-watcher, deeply absorbed as he had been. He turned slowly round and withdrew within the curtain.

By this time Columbine had retreated a few yards, and dropped down upon a bench.

He saw her, and across the pallor of his countenance swept a deep flush, half of anger, not pleasing. Such a handsome face it was, with the eyes of a poet and the mouth of a woman.

Such marvellous promise and capabilities in the countenance one might have wept while gazing thereon; for it was the face of a man consumed by a mad passion, and the direct form of what men term insanity is not so mad as that.

It looked as if the features were translucent and the soul within on fire and showing through the alabaster-like mask.

He stared full at poor Columbine with those great, brown eyes which ought to have been so beautiful and soft, but were now like two flames.

In an instant a sudden fierce rage started up, separate and distinct from the hungry passion gleaming in those orbs, and poor Columbine shrank back with a colder tremor at her heart, for she knew the wrath was for her, while the passion was for the Polish woman.

It sounds odd, but even in her confusion and distress of mind and body Columbine distinguished between the two expressions that struggled in his face, and the latter was the harder to bear. She could not speak. She sat and regarded him in a dumb, fascinated sort of fashion. At length he spoke.

"What are you watching me for?" he cried, and the voice was as sad to hear as the face to study.

Nature had meant that voice to be sweet and deep as the low notes of an organ, and now it seemed hoarse and sharp, with just an echo of the sweetness left, as if to soften, in spite of itself, somewhat, the harsh ring:

"Always watching me—always."

"You know I would not," Columbine exclaimed, gasping between mental and physical pain, though she scarcely felt the latter, severe as it was. "I only came to see if you had your great-coat on. As I stepped back I stumbled over that heap of rubbish. I'm such an awkward thing. And, oh, Rudolf, you've neither great-coat nor hat—and your chest—and that dreadful cold."

"Nonsense!" said he.

And then his utterance was cut short by a short, hacking cough.

"You are worse," exclaimed Columbine, like any real woman, forgetting everything in the anxiety roused by that sound. "I am sure you are worse."

"I coughed just because you reminded me," he said, pettishly, as soon as he could speak; "I do well enough if I am left alone."

"Yes—only please put your coat on," pleaded Columbine, not pausing then to feel the sting of his careless, cruel words.

They had gone straight to her heart, but there would be time enough to remember how they hurt when the evening's toil was over and she was safe in her solitary home.

She saw his coat and hat lying on the floor

by the bench, and stooped to pick them up. The movement sent a sharp twinge through her bruised shoulder, which wrung a stifled moan from her lips.

He frowned at her, and cried out:

"You look as if you were dead. Don't be such a fool."

His voice would have been brutal only that it was so full of remorse. It sounded as if some foul spirit forced him to utter the words, and as if he loathed himself, therefore, even while yielding to the spell.

"I hurt my arm; I told you I was a clumsy thing," Columbine answered, and began to laugh.

She knew that she must either laugh or shriek, for she had reached the stage of nervous excitement, when emotion will find some vent, in spite of resolution, and she would not pain or fret him by tears. She was a real woman, you see, this poor little Columbine.

She managed, feebly, to pick up the coat, which was a loose paletot, with wide sleeves, such as artists love. Then she slouched hat, with its pheasant's feather, which she had herself pinned in—no, the feather was no longer there! In its place Columbine saw a tuft of vivid red, and with a whirl and a rush in her brain, which made her stagger and clutch at the bench for support, the poor girl had a quick vision of the beautiful Pole, as she had seen her on the preceding day, dashing through one of the avenues in her open victoria, and Columbine, crossing the street at the moment, had barely time to spring forward at the coachman's angry warning, and so escape being trampled under the horses' hoofs.

But the Pole had not noticed the poor girl who had fastened such despairing eyes on her fatal loveliness. She had passed on, wrapped in her priceless sables, with just one glint of colour to lighten the sombreness of her costume, a tuft of scarlet feathers in her velvet turban—and here they were again!

"What are you doing?" Rudolf called, and his tones brought Columbine back to the exigencies of the moment, the need to be quiet.

"Picking up your coat and hat," she answered.

He stepped forward, took both from her, and put them on. He seemed about to go his way without another word; his face looked hard as iron with obstinacy. Then he caught her eyes; he beheld no reproach there, but, oh! such anguish—such heavenly patience! In an instant he fell upon his knees in the dust beside her, and stretched out his arms in wild supplication, moaning:

"Oh, my God, Rita, oh, my God! He won't forgive me—but do you?"

Before she could speak the orchestra ceased playing (neither had known that it had begun), the bell rang, the curtain began to ascend, and Christopher looked out from a wing and called:

"It is your turn to go on! Come!"

Columbine ran. Christopher caught her hand to lead her out on the stage, when she glanced back and saw Rudolf leaning against a side-scene, white and still. With a sudden wrench, she freed herself, hurried back, threw both arms about the young man's neck and sobbed:

"If I have anything to forgive, it is forgiven already—Rudolf, dear Rudolf!"

Then she darted back again, joined Christopher, and went with him on the stage. And presently there rose the shouts and laughter of the spectators over the rapidly succeeding scenes of the extravaganza.

Rudolf da Conti stood, shuddering and appalled, when Rita had left him.

Somehow, the touch of her lips seemed to smite his very soul. They swept aside the fierce waves of passion, which had battled there for weeks, and he saw it, black and desolate—good impulses rooted up—rightful ambition choked and dead. Oh, dreadful sight! Not even like the dull stretch of sea-shore when the tide is out; more like the deserted lava fields about a volcano, where the billows are living fire!

He was conscious of thinking that what he saw and felt was what a lost soul, flung beyond the chances of Time into the deadlock of Eternity, must see and feel—past, present, future, all one for ever!

For a few moments he remained stunned, motionless, and face to face with remorse in all its force and horror. But for only a few. As he staggered up from the bench upon which he had unconsciously sunk, his eyes wandered towards the stage-box again, involuntarily, for he had not meant to look.

The Pole was leaning forward in her seat, and across the breadth and glare of the scene her enchantress's eyes seemed fastened on him. Back rushed the accursed flame; remorse and memory were burned out in a flash; the heaven-sent warning had failed. Does it seem strange? Did not Abraham cry to Dives across the gulf: "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead?"

His tormentor had forbidden him to enter her presence that night, without any reason for the prohibition, save that contained in the exquisite pleasure it gave her to torture him. He dared not, in consequence, intrude. No ordinary rules ever influenced her in the least. If he were to force himself upon her notice, she would be capable of telling him before her flatterers that she did not even remember his name.

He rushed off into the chaos behind the scenes, made his way across the stage, and gained a door, giving admittance to a passage, from which he could reach the main body of the house. He shoved and pushed a path through the crowd collected in the aisle between the boxes and the parterre chairs, until he stood close up at the side of the orchestra, just under the stage-box where the Princess Daniski sat.

The curtain had fallen on the first act of the piece. The musicians were playing a weird nocturne, which roused in Da Conti's vivid imagination a picture of a night in some frozen zone, a night lighted by spectral borealis instead of the moon, and crowning a witches' orgie with its ghastly rays. Yet the fancy was subordinate to the prominent thought in his mind; he kept staring up at her, always at her.

The music ceased. The Pole was speaking, conversing with the lady by her side. Her voice floated down to Rudolf as she leaned against the front of the box.

"If men only knew us women as we know each other, they could make themselves loved," she was saying, in her low, sweet tones, that were always so distinct. "Strength, force, that is what we worship. What else induced the beautiful Roman princess to follow the scarred old gladiator? Love—I? No; I have never loved. I am waiting for some man to frighten my will powerless by a deed daring enough to subdue it—good or bad, brave or cruel."

Then she laughed in mockery of her own idle talk, and a rosebud, its core so red that it resembled a drop of blood, fluttered slowly from her listless fingers, and fell on Rudolf's shoulder. Was it by design?

Through a chink in the curtain Columbine watched. Amid all the countless throng, her gaze went quick and unerringly towards Da Conti, as if he had stood alone in the great crescent, and her fortitude yielded for a little as she looked. It was not jealousy which moved her. She was that rarest of human beings, a creature who could love so entirely that self lost its power. It was not her own pain which conquered. She would bear that bravely till it wore life out. But she shuddered at the certainty of what awaited Rudolf, the ruin, moral and physical, to which he was letting himself be passively dragged down.

As Columbine tottered away into a dark corner, sobbing with all the might of her poor broken heart, old Christopher appeared at her side again, but she was too weak and spent for the moment to attempt either subterfuge or concealment.

"If she only loved him, I should be thankful—nothing is of any consequence except his happiness—nothing!" she moaned. "But she wants to murder him, Christopher—only that! Because he is as handsome as those ancient gods



[BEHIND THE SCENES.]

he read to me about, because he has genius which might make him great, she has a pleasure in killing his soul. She wants to do it slowly, and watch it wither day by day. Oh, I know, I know. I'm a poor, ignorant creature, and I can't explain, but I understand!"

"Ay," said Christopher.

But still she did not realize his presence.

"It was not to be expected he could be satisfied with my love, he so gifted, so learned. I was just a worm gazing up at a star. But to stand by and see that woman steal his soul. And we were to have been married this month if— But that is not it—better he found out in time—it is ruin, his ruin, that I cannot bear. No power on earth can save him, and heaven is so cruel that it will not try."

"Heaven sent him his angel and he would not listen," said her companion, of whose presence she now, for the first time, became aware. She turned on him in sudden, hot wrath.

"Don't you say a word against him. Don't you dare!" she cried. "Not a word. How can you judge him?" with ineffable scorn.

Then as she saw the sad face beside her so full of pity for her mood changed.

"Oh, forgive me. I should not speak to you like that," she moaned. "Ah, don't blame me—I suffer so—I suffer so!"

The old actor took her in his arms and both sobbed for a few seconds in speechless grief. Then the music floated out, the bell rang, the curtain rose, and its withdrawal disclosed the Elysian Fields. Columbine, in spite of her breaking heart, had to go back to the stage.

Meantime, the old actor in his turn sought a convenient nook from which to watch the box, which even amid the magical beauty and the insane fun presented on the stage attracted many eyes.

He saw the second lady rise and bid the enchantress farewell, and as she left the box an imperious gesture of the Pole's hand sent the trio of men away in the departing visitor's wake. The actor stood regarding the Circe for a few seconds, then he muttered to himself:

"I'll try it—why not? It can do no harm. Who knows but what some good may come of my speaking to her? Whatever else she does or leaves undone, she always keeps her word. Nobody ever denied that; and she told me that she was grateful for what I did and would never forget; it's years since, it's true. Well, but, let us see—let us see."

He nodded his head several times in a resolute fashion and turned towards the passage through which Rudolf had passed half an hour before; but almost at the first step his course was arrested by hearing one of the supernumeraries say:

"Here's the very man himself. Here's Christopher if you want him. As for Rita Columbine you see she's on the stage, so you can't get at her at present; but she'll be through by-and-bye; and by that time perhaps you'll have done with Christopher."

The old actor turned and saw a man coming towards him whom he did not know; but impatient as he was to push forward and do his errand, he could not go just then, for the stranger said:

"I have something most important to tell you. It concerns Rita Meredith. I see you're in a hurry; but—"

"No hurry at all," he muttered, "for the other. Plenty of time."

It was nearly half an hour before the old actor emerged from the room to which he had led the stranger, and when he did so he went on to the stage again to fill his part. After that he had a word or two to say to the stranger again; and after that he went to the box where the Pole was still sitting.

His companion, meantime, remained at the wings, watching, unobserved, the progress of the spectacle on the stage. He seemed especially attracted towards Columbine, whose graceful movements and eloquent pantomime he could not apparently admire too much.

Once he thought he saw tears in her eyes and he felt inexpressibly sad. Once he heard the manager speak roughly to her, and he had al-

most an uncontrollable impulse to knock the brute down.

"She's beautiful, beautiful," he said, more than once, "and as good as she is handsome, the old man says. But, ha! What is this?"

For at that moment a spark of fire, that evidently came from above, fell directly at his feet. At first he supposed it was part of the play, though he could not help thinking it was a very dangerous thing to risk; but when, almost immediately, the spark, which had gone out at once, was followed by a bit of burning canvas, not large, a mere fragment indeed, but which did not go out, he glanced up overhead in alarm. At the same instant he was conscious of a subtle smell of smoke, and a dull roar, that deepened and intensified as he listened.

"Fire! Fire!"

It was as it seemed to him a thousand voices that now spoke. The whole audience were on their feet. Shrieks, cries for help, hysterical sobs from women, echoed from every side; and over all with an increasing roar that within a minute deepened to thunder rose the noise of the conflagration.

Then again and again the wild cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

His first thought, strange to say, was not of himself but of Columbine. He turned to look for her. When he had last seen her she was on the opposite side of the stage from him not far from the stage box.

It was in that part of the theatre apparently that the fire had originated; for the flames now had mastered it from stage to roof; and even the box itself was lost sight of behind a dense curtain of smoke and fire.

All at once he saw the figure of Columbine dash into what seemed the thickest of the conflagration on that side. He was about to follow when a strong arm caught hold of him and jerked him back, and a voice said:

"This way, sir, if you'd be saved. T'other side of the theatre is past hope already."

(To be Continued.)

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[A FAIR SUPPLICANT.]

THE BEAUTY OF MOSSVILLE.

(A COMPLETE STORY).

CHAPTER I.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM LONDON.

The sun was going down in a glory of crimson, purple, and gold, and the light of the declining orb played upon the foliage of the trees flanking a long, white, dusty hill.

The day had been one to turn the grass to tinder and to tinge the waving corn just bursting into ear, and though it was evening it was still oppressively warm.

At least so Cecil Trevellyn thought as he stopped to ease the tourist knapsack strapped to his back, and removed his hat to allow the breeze to cool his forehead.

The sun was full on him, and it shone on the true type of a young Englishman, tall, broad-shouldered, ruddy-cheeked, full good-humoured eyes, and handsome.

Standing there at the foot of the hill, which seemed to end in the sky, he took a long breath, glanced at his dusty boots, and then prepared for the battle between the incline and his already weary legs.

Many a man would have thrown himself down under one of those shady trees and dozed away the evening, but Cecil Trevellyn was strange to the country. The people were rough, and as Cecil had encountered several evil-looking tramps he had made up his mind to reach Mossville and rest in some old-fashioned inn.

It is a well-established fact that if a countryman states that it is a mile to any given place, the traveller may make up his mind for two such miles as Londoners are used to, and Cecil having left Powisland at four in the afternoon under

the impression that Mossville would appear within eight miles found himself at seven o'clock apparently as far from his destination as ever.

"Not even a house," he murmured, "and not a creature to tell me whether I am on the right road. If I have lost my way it strikes me rather forcibly that I shall have the grass for a bed and the sky for a coverlet."

But Cecil was mistaken. There was a house, and it came in sight so suddenly that he came to a standstill and breathed a sigh of relief.

The house, or cottage as it should be properly called, stood back from the road, and was approached by a garden bearing a plentiful crop of weeds.

The windows were clean, but there were no flowers or prettily-arranged blinds in it as is generally the case with rustic habitations, and Cecil's heart sank, for he at first thought of craving shelter until the morning.

As he lingered for a moment at the garden gate a man smoking a short black pipe slouched out of the cottage door and asked our tourist what he wanted, in an uncouth fashion. Cecil Trevellyn looked at the man before replying, and the more he looked at him the less he liked his appearance, for Peter Silch, the brick burner and the tenant of the cottage, was as uncouth and rough in aspect as his voice was in tone.

At the man's heels sat an evil-looking bull dog, a fitting companion for his master, and as Cecil opened his lips to speak he saw a pale-faced woman appear for a moment at the blindless window and shake her head.

"Pleasant," Cecil thought, and then he asked politely whether he was on the right road for Mossville.

"There's more than one road," the ill-conditioned Mr. Silch replied, without removing the pipe from his lips. "Mossville lies four miles away if you keep to the road; but there's another way through the woods, two miles shorter."

Again Cecil Trevellyn saw the pale face at the

window, and again he saw that solemn shake of the head.

"Thank you," said Cecil. "I will keep to the highway."

As soon as he was out of sight Peter Silch bestowed a kick on the dog, and muttering something about them "stuck-up Lunnun chaps" went down to the gate to watch him.

He saw the stalwart young fellow breasting the hill manfully, and lost sight of him by degrees at the summit just as a ship seems to slip down the horizon.

Mr. Silch had rather over-estimated the distance, and before it was fairly dusk Cecil Trevellyn was sitting in an inn before a table laid with a snowy white cloth and all the accessories necessary for a comfortable meal.

Changed in attire, and his heavy walking boots thrown aside for thinner ones, Cecil felt but little fatigue, and finding the rosy-cheeked landlord of a conversational turn of mind, he put several questions to him respecting Mossville.

"You be a stranger to these parts then," said the host, glancing with rustic curiosity at his guest.

"Quite a stranger," Cecil Trevellyn replied. "I am an artist by choice, though not by profession, and hearing that there was some pretty sketching to be had, I thought I could not do better than pay your neat little village a visit."

"Well, sir," said the host of the King's Head, "we do pride ourselves a little. There's the church, I forget how many years old; there's Bluebell Hollows, where they say the flowers at night change to fairies; there's the ruins of the castle; there's the convent; and then—I s'pose, sir, you are not in the portrait painting line?"

"No. Why?" Cecil asked, with some dim idea that the host was about to ask him to paint a new sign.

"Because I should like to see a true picture of Miss Rose Stanfield, our vicar's daughter."

Cecil Trevellyn became interested at once. He pushed his plate aside and requested that the landlord would join him in a bottle of wine,

and then in a few minutes he heard more about Mossville and its celebrities than he could have possibly found out for himself in a month.

He heard how Rose Stanfield was called the Beauty of Mossville, and how it was rumoured that she was engaged to be married to Lord Richard Hawthorne, who owned the entire place and the land for miles round.

"Poor Miss Rose," said the host, with a sigh. "I fear it is not a love match, and somehow I read that in her father's face. He grows thinner every day, and I know that he can scarcely bear his daughter out of his sight for a moment."

"And yet, Mr. Purdy, this may be all supposition," Cecil said. "It is not every vicar's daughter who finds a lord pleading at her feet."

"True, sir, true," said John Purdy, dropping his voice almost to a whisper. "But they do say that the vicar is in difficulties, and that he is under Lord Hawthorne's thumb."

Mr. Purdy, under the influence of the better part of the bottle of wine, drifted away into other matters, but now he spoke to inattentive ears.

Cecil Trevellyn was interested in Rose Stanfield, without knowing why, and, quickly following by some extraordinary means, he associated her and himself with the man he had spoken to at the cottage on the hill, and then at last, coming to the conclusion that he was falling asleep and dreaming nonsense, he gave himself a shake and announced his intention of going out for a walk.

"You will sleep here, sir?" said Mr. Purdy.

"Undoubtedly," Cecil replied. "I am merely going for a stroll to see how the church looks by moonlight, and surely it is a pity to waste the whole of so lovely a night."

The night was calm and sweet, and the air deliciously cool. Cecil Trevellyn glanced up at the full moon, as bright as burnished silver, sailing grandly in the cloudless sky, and, following the spire which towered over the quaintly shaped houses, he soon reached the churchyard.

"Let me see," he said, as he pushed open the swing gate and sat down on a moss-covered tomb. "I think my genial host told me in his 'ramblings' that this place was haunted, and, by all that is wonderful, here comes a ghost or something like one."

Cecil Trevellyn had scarcely time to rise before he found himself face to face with a lady wearing a white shawl neatly crossed on her shoulders, and behind her came a grey-haired gentleman, a little bowed, but firm of step.

"The vicar and his daughter," Cecil thought as he stepped out of the path.

"Good evening."

It was the grey-haired gentleman who spoke, and Cecil returned the greeting cordially, casting at the same time swift glances at the neat figure of the lady and the clerical garb of her companion. The Reverend Ransome Stanfield seeing a stranger before him, did not seem inclined to part with him in a moment.

"You are admiring our fine old church," he said. "Well, I for one am proud of it, and my daughter, Rose," Cecil raised his hat and bowed, "and I pay it a visit every evening just to convince the people that we are not afraid that the ghosts of the knights of old should claim their armour."

"So the people of Mossville are superstitious," Cecil said.

"Not more than most rustic people," the vicar replied. "But it is hard to convince them that the dead are for ever at rest."

It is wonderful what a small world this is we live in, and how people meeting by accident become interested in each other and by some strange decree linked in one common fate.

Almost before Cecil had left the churchyard he had introduced himself to the vicar and his daughter, and was chatting as if he had known them all his life.

"And so you have come to take impressions of Mossville away on canvas," said the vicar. "I should dearly like a sketch of the church in which I have preached for twenty years."

"With all my heart," Cecil replied. "But I

fear my very best effort will be but a poor one. Tuition I had none. I was a spoiled child, but the beauty lavished by the Creator's hand I acknowledge and admire with feelings too strong to give them a passing thought, and so instead of leading an idle life I am a wanderer, filling my portfolios with memories of my travels."

"Come, Mr. Trevellyn, I will make a bargain with you," said the vicar. "Rose and I are both admirers of art, and will be pleased to entertain you for a few days. Indeed, we have been longing for a visitor to entertain us, and so I beg that you will not say nay."

Rose Stanfield urged the plea too, saying, laughingly, that she would make a patient attendant and mix the colours, and so, before Cecil could scarcely realise his good fortune, he was bound for the home of the vicar and the Beauty of Mossville.

CHAPTER II.

THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD.

"You may enjoy your cigar, Mr. Trevellyn. The supper-club has been removed, and Cecil sat facing Rose, while the vicar sat by in the chimney corner, endeavouring to find a fresh topic every five minutes to interest his visitors."

And sitting there in that homely room, bearing the evidence of gentle woman's touch, Cecil Trevellyn lost his heart.

Rose Stanfield deserved the name given to her by the people of Mossville. Her beauty was in its simplicity. It was no question as to whether it rested with her eyes, chin, mouth, or nose; her features were perfect, her complexion lovely, her golden hair curling naturally, and when she spoke her parted lips displayed teeth of whiteness that the sea, with all its wealth of pearls, might have envied.

Her voice was as musical and clear as a silver bell, and she had a power of talking in a style that could not fail to interest. It was now of the poor she visited, now of the village children, then away to subjects of deeper import, and smilingly apologising to the enraptured guest for her ignorance of the great world of London and the habits of its richer people.

She wore a solitary ring of antique shape, and Cecil was therefore convinced that the story about Lord Richard Hawthorne was pure fiction, but he determined to test it without evincing the slightest knowledge on his part.

"I suppose there are some grand county people hereabouts," he said, and noticed at once a change in both the vicar's and Rose's faces.

"Not many; but that reminds me of something," the vicar replied, after a slight pause. "Lord Hawthorne will be back from town in three days. So I see by his letter?"

There was another pause, a longer one than before, and was only broken by the vicar asking his daughter to sing.

She rose and went to the piano without speaking, but presently her fingers ran lightly over the keys, and, in a voice full of feeling and pathos, she sang:

"There was a time, my companion,
When my heart was unfettered and free,
As free as the wild bird hovering
O'er the blue and the bonny seas.
But the past is gone, and the future
Looks so dim, so sad, and so dreary,
That I fear would lie down and die,
Like one that is worn out and weary."

"That is rather a dismal song, Rose," said the vicar, "but never mind; let us have the next verse."

Again the room was filled with that plaintive, delicious voice.

"I wonder when the wild waves at even
Murmur to me, and the dusky shores
That love—"

Rose Stanfield's hands left the piano and covered her eyes.

"My darling," the vicar cried, and was at her side in a moment, "you are crying. You are not well. Retire to your room, my child. Hush, hush, remember that we have Mr. Trevellyn here."

"I know it is weak and foolish of me," Rose

said, "but that song always strikes a chord to my very heart. Good night, Mr. Trevellyn, and pray pardon my foolish weakness."

Their hands and eyes met at the same instant.

In Rose Stanfield's eyes Cecil read the history of no common sorrow. In his eyes the beautiful girl saw the dawning light of love, and her dainty hand trembled for a moment.

Then she was gone, and the vicar, returning to his chair, said:

"Mr. Trevellyn, our acquaintance is but a short one, but it does not take me long to tell the man I may confide in, and I want to confide in you."

Cecil bowed, and drew his chair to the other side of the ancient fireplace.

"If I can serve you in any way," he said, "I am entirely at your command."

"I fear not," the vicar replied, "but hear my story. Brief as I shall make it, the narration will lift a burden from my heart. It is said that every cupboard has its skeleton, and you will soon behold ours."

"My wife died six years ago, but long before her death she was sick and ailing, and the physicians from London declared that nothing could prolong her life but a lengthened stay in a warmer climate."

"She refused to travel without Rose and me, but this living has always been a poor one, and I had almost given up all hope of being able to carry out the medical advice when the late Lord Hawthorne came to the rescue."

"He lent me money, and I, leaving a curate in charge, paying him the yearly value of my living, went with my wife and Rose to Mentone. We lived quietly and content in society but our own but misfortune followed us. My wife grew worse instead of better, and more money was soon needed, and I had no other alternative but to write to Lord Hawthorne for a further advance, sending him an acknowledgment for five hundred pounds in all."

"Another year passed and still it was impossible to bring my wife to England, and she clung to me, praying that I would not leave her in a strange place. The borrowed purse was getting light again, and once more I sat down to write for an increase of the loan. Well, it does not take a thousand pounds long to go, and when at last my wife said, 'Ransome, take me home to die, all that has been done is in vain,' I owed Lord Hawthorne exactly a thousand pounds."

"Not many days after our arrival in England my dear wife crossed her hands humbly on her bosom and went to the home prepared for her, and Lord Hawthorne, bringing his son, the present lord, called to sympathise with us."

"Stanfield," said his lordship, "I am an old man, and something tells me that my earthly career is growing to a close, and I have been thinking deeply how you will stand affected after I am gone."

"I knew he was referring to the loan, but I held my peace and let him go on."

"My son will inherit all I have," he continued, "and as I wish you to keep friends with him I intend to destroy certain papers, and amongst them the acknowledgment for the thousand pounds. Nay, I require no thanks, for had it been in your power I am sure you would have done the same thing for me without a murmur."

"My heart was very full, and indeed I could hardly find words to thank him, but he saw the tears of gratitude welling into my eyes and led me back to the house."

"Six months after Lord Hawthorne was borne to the family vault, and his son, Richard, became lord and master. He often called to see us—more often than I liked, because I saw that he loved Rose in his way; but rumours resolving into undoubted facts were soon bruited about that the old Grange was the scene of many a midnight debauch."

"I taxed him with this crime, for it is nothing else, and he could not deny it, and made no excuse save that a man has a right to do what he likes with his own money. Then I forbade him to enter this house. But in spite of that he came

again, and one day Rose received a written proposal of marriage.

"Rich as the man was, good as his father had been to us, Rose could not but loathe the son, who gathered all kinds of low characters about him to pollute the dwelling-house of a noble family.

"And now comes the result of Rose's refusal. The late Lord Hawthorne did not destroy my acknowledgments, and now these household gods, so dear to me for the sake of the memory of the dead, are in peril of being dragged from me."

"What!" Cecil Trevellyn cried. "Do you mean to tell me that Lord Hawthorne has threatened you because he cannot claim your daughter's hand?"

"I regret that is so," the vicar said. "He will be here at the end of the week, and unless Rose consents, to be his wife, which of course she will not, I may be a homeless man. For myself I care but little, but for Rose. Oh! my child, it will be a sad blow to you."

"Mr. Stanfield," said Cecil Trevellyn, "if you will allow me to smoke another cigar to calm my feelings, we will continue to talk this matter over, and I think I can show you a way out of the difficulty."

"I fear not," the vicar said. "Lord Hawthorne would listen to no pleadings from a stranger."

"But if he were paid in full he would have nothing to grumble about."

"I do not understand you."

"Well, then, to be plain," said Cecil Trevellyn, "I will lend you a thousand pounds. In two days' time it shall arrive from my bankers in London; so take courage and look forward cheerfully to the prospect of seeing the bitter bit. Vicar, I begin to think that something more than chance brought me to Mossville."

CHAPTER III.

THE SHADOW DEEPENS.

PETER SILCH, with his pipe stuck in his mouth as if he had gone to bed with it, was taken aback at seeing Cecil Trevellyn leaning over the vicarage garden gate.

It was rather a shock to Mr. Silch's nerves. He was not adverse to a little poaching or an occasional burglary on a small scale, and the sight of a stranger he could make nothing of filled him with uncomfortable feelings, for having heard of Scotland Yard and the marvels worked by the wonderful men therein, it struck him now and then that at some time or other a quiet-looking stranger, not at all like a policeman, might request him to wear a pair of handcuffs.

Silch picked up his feet much quicker than was his wont, and disappeared, but Cecil Trevellyn had not even recognised him.

He was painting a mental picture of glowing colours, but somehow or other the background persisted in remaining gloomy. There was one figure in it which refused to be erased, and that was the figure of Lord Hawthorne, dark, distinct and lowering.

"But what am I doing?" he said, turning away from the gate. "Where am I drifting to? Cecil, you are a selfish fool and a stupid one too; to expect that this girl will throw herself into your arms because you have condescended to lend her father a few paltry pounds. Bah! I'm ashamed of you, sir!"

"Talking to one's self is a bad habit and likely to lead to mischief," said a pleasant voice, so close to him that he started and turned sharply round.

Rose Stanfield met his astonished glance with a smile.

"Do you paint so early?" she asked.

"No, Miss Stanfield," Cecil replied. "See, the mists have not yet risen, and had they done so I am inclined to give my brushes a rest this morning. To be candid I passed a rather restless night."

"I am so sorry. Have you no idea of the cause?"

"Yes."

"And can it be rectified in any way?"

"I will try and tell you if you will do me the honour to take a walk with me," Cecil said.

"Miss Stanfield, the truth may as well come from my lips as from your father's. I know your secret."

"My secret?"

"You dread to meet Lord Hawthorne," said Cecil Trevellyn. "Nay, do not start, for the vicar told me not only that but how he was embarrassed."

"It is terrible," Rose said, drooping her pretty head. "To me it seems like an awful dream from which I shall presently awake. Oh! that it could be so."

"There are some dreams I could dream and never wish to awake from," Cecil thought, as he glanced at the charming girl at his side.

"There is a dark side to most lives," he said, "but, Miss Stanfield, so is there a silver lining to every storm cloud. As I am in your father's confidence let me also be in yours, which is in reality one and the same thing. Let us suppose that the worst is about to happen; say that Lord Hawthorne demands the full payment of the loan, what will you—"

"I know not what I shall do," Rose interrupted, mournfully, and then she broke out, passionately: "I hate and detest the man, but how can I see our dear old home, little as it may be worth, broken up? Can I see my father driven into the streets? No, no, no."

Her tears melted Cecil's heart.

"I was wrong to bring up such a subject," he said. "I beg your pardon sincerely."

"Do not do that," Rose Stanfield said. "I look upon you already as an old and dear friend. You have come among us just at the time when we need sympathy and advice. See, I have dried those foolish tears, and I will be brave, yes, brave, through even the worst of trouble." "Shall I tell her of what I intend to do?" Cecil Trevellyn questioned himself. "No, that will look too much as if—Confound it, I must not make an idiot of myself. It has never struck me that perhaps her heart is bestowed in another quarter."

They walked across the footpaths of the pleasant meadows, green, fragrant and laden with dew. They trod the banks of the stream, murmuring soft laughter and winding away to a thread of silver in the distance, and the sun was shining brightly and bestowing warmth on the earth when they retraced their steps to the vicarage.

The post-bag contained but two letters—one for the vicar and the other for Rose, and both addressed in the same handwriting, and Cecil Trevellyn soon learned that Lord Hawthorne was coming back from town unexpectedly that very day.

"Vicar," said Cecil, taking the old gentleman's arm and leading him up and down the lawn, "I want you to make me a promise."

"I will do so, and endeavour to keep it," the Reverend Ransome replied, "but, mind you, I say so conditionally, as I do not know the nature of the promise you wish to extract from me."

"It is this," said Cecil Trevellyn. "I do not wish your daughter to know that any arrangement exists between us until Lord Hawthorne is settled with and I am away."

"And will you leave us soon?"

"Yes, the day after to-morrow."

"But why? This sudden resolve will pain Rose as much as mine."

"It will pain me too," Cecil said, slowly, "but there is no help for it. I am going abroad, for, Mr. Stanfield, if I remained here I should learn to love your daughter, and I do not wish her to think that I have any selfish motive at heart." The vicar was about to speak when Rose announced breakfast, and scarcely was the meal at an end when Lord Richard Hawthorne was announced.

"He is early," said the vicar, as a shadow fell upon his face. "Mr. Trevellyn, may I ask you to accompany me? My nerves are rather out of order. Rose has no occasion to see his lordship, and will remain here."

Lord Richard Hawthorne was tall and dark,

and what many people would call good-looking, but he had an unpleasant way of twitching his lips and displaying his teeth as he spoke.

The introduction between him and Cecil Trevellyn was as cold as it was formal.

"I had no idea you had company, vicar," Lord Hawthorne said. "I called about that business between us, but to-morrow will do, as there is very little to be arranged."

"Very little," the vicar replied. "I am glad to inform you of that, and also that Mr. Trevellyn is my friend, and in my confidence, therefore you may proceed to state the object of your visit."

"You are really too bad, Ransome," Lord Hawthorne said. "You try my patience; indeed, your conduct amounts to an insult."

The vicar bit his lip, and looked at Cecil Trevellyn, who said:

"My lord, Mr. Ransome has told me his story, and I have found him a friend who will remove his liability and pay your claim the day after to-morrow."

"Indeed," said his lordship, growing white with suppressed passion. "So I suppose, my young, artistic friend, you have been called in to step between me and Miss Stanfield?"

"As I am a man, and I trust, an honourable one, I am almost a stranger in this house," Cecil Trevellyn replied, "and I am likely to be a stranger to it again before many days. My lord, does it not strike you that the vicar thinks it is time this interview came to an end?"

Lord Richard Hawthorne rose, and his eyes flashed with evil and hatred as he turned them on Cecil and said:

"We shall meet again, my friend. I see that there is a conspiracy against me. I see that Miss Stanfield's ears have been poisoned, but, in spite of all, I will not give her up, and will win her yet."

"My lord," said the vicar, in a tremulous voice, "I beg you to remember that you are under my roof. I have the honour and pleasure to wish you a very good morning."

Lord Hawthorne passed out of the house, but as he crossed the lawn he turned and glanced at the windows, as if in hopes of seeing Rose, but, disappointed in that, he clenched his fist, and cursing the man who held his carriage door open, was driven back to Mossville Grange.

"I am thankful that the meeting is over," the vicar said, fervently, as he and Cecil returned to the breakfast-room. "Look up, Rose; the cloud has passed away, and the sun shines brightly again."

Rose had been weeping, and her face was still buried in her hands, but she looked up into her father's face and said:

"Has Lord Hawthorne relented?"

"No, child, but I think, through the kindness of a friend, that I shall be able to do without his lordship's pity or forbearance. Why, here comes the postman again. I suppose he forgot to leave a letter."

The man was in search of Cecil Trevellyn, who went out to him and received a letter bearing several postmarks.

"I have had some little trouble to find you, sir," the man said, touching his hat in acknowledgment of a welcome half-crown. "You will see that the letter was received at Powisland, and sent on here."

Cecil stood alone in the sunny doorway and opened the letter and read:

"King's Bench, Walk.

"June 28th, 1877.

"MY DEAR CECIL,—You must return to London without delay. I do not wish to frighten you, but the truth must be told at once. Your bankers, Messrs. Forcem and Keppitt, have closed their doors—in other words, stopped payment; and, if what I hear is true, it will become time before their affairs can be arranged and a satisfactory dividend declared. I cannot tell how sorry I am for you, my old friend and schoolmate, but cheer up, for all may yet end well. I am rather short of money, but if you want a hundred to keep your head above water

you will find that you will not ask in vain of your very sincere friend,

"ALFRED SNELLING."

A groan escaped Cecil Trevellyn's lips as the letter slipped from his fingers and fell nestling to the ground.

"Lost!" he cried, "all is lost!" He heard the vicar's footsteps approaching, and, pointing at the letter, said:

"Mr. Stanfield, I have not the heart to tell you the news. Read for yourself."

The vicarage was full of sorrow that day, for Cecil Trevellyn, with scarcely a hope in his heart, had hied to London.

He returned the next day, bearing the worst tidings, and it was soon known that he was a ruined man, for Lord Hawthorne called to claim his due, and the melancholy truth had to be told him.

"This is a world full of disappointments and sudden changes," he said. "Well, vicar, I will give Rose twenty-four hours to consider if I am worthy of her, but if she remains in the same obstinate frame of mind I have only one course to pursue."

The Reverend Stanfield waved his arm.

"Take all," he said. "The cup of bitterness is full, but you shall not rob me of my daughter. I would rather starve than know that she sacrificed herself to a man without heart or honour."

"You are an old man, but keep a guard on your tongue," Lord Hawthorne hissed.

"I am still master of this house," said the vicar, flushing with anger he could not control. "There is the door. Leave at once, or I will have you expelled by force."

"When I next enter this place no man shall say me nay," Lord Hawthorne said. "Take my advice, vicar, and tell that beggar, Trevellyn, to make himself scarce."

His lordship turned haughtily on his heel and left the vicar's study, and then the good old man rested his head on the table and prayed for strength and mercy.

Night came, dark and stormy.

The wind sighed and moaned round the house like a restless spirit, and Cecil Trevellyn's thoughts were in common with the night.

He could not rest, and as soon as the vicar and his daughter had retired he let himself out of the house and walked swiftly away.

He would go over the same ground as he and Rose had trod but a few hours ago. He could then think of her as if she were at his side.

That very day, in spite of all his misfortunes, had told him that she had loved him, but ruined as he was, perhaps for ever, how could he ask her hand?

The world was before him. Yes, but would it not prove cold to him, brought up in the lap of luxury, gifted with but a few accomplishments and ignorant of business as the very trees he passed?

He wandered from the beaten track and found that he was in a wood and had lost his way, and as he turned to find the path he saw a tiny light which glanced and faded away alternately.

Then a wreath, a white smoke, and a well-known scent told him that he was in the presence of somebody smoking a cigar, and a strange thrill ran through him as he recognised Lord Hawthorne.

"What are you doing here?" his lordship demanded, sharply. "You are trespassing, fellow."

"I regret to hear it from your lips," Cecil replied. "It was done in ignorance, and I shake the dust from my feet."

"You are insolent," Lord Hawthorne said, "but a beggar can easily afford to be so. But let me tell you that neither your defiant bearing nor your misfortunes shall save you from personal chastisement if you do not apologise."

"You ride the high horse now," Cecil replied. "Go on, sir, it is delightful to hear a gentleman converse."

Lord Richard Hawthorne winced. He had met his match and knew it.

"I wish to have nothing to say to you," he

said, lighting a fresh cigar and endeavouring to speak coolly. "I am sorry for you in a measure, and if you call I may feel inclined to purchase a few of your pictures to give you another start in the world."

"Thank you, my lord. I do not think you would approve of my works of art."

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it," said Lord Hawthorne. "I have a picture gallery full of rubbish, and thought of sending to London for a man to offer a price. I don't care for ghastly figures in ruffs and wigs and what-not to stare me out of countenance."

"You do not seem to agree with your ancestors," Cecil Trevellyn replied. "I should have thought that these portraits which, to use your own words, stare you out of countenance, would remind you of a long and unblemished line. If they were mine by right I should think of the days of old, and remember that I belonged to a race of men kind, gentle, courteous, chivalrous, but who did not scruple to buckle on armour and draw the sword for the sake of their king, their country, and the loved ones at home."

Lord Hawthorne puffed slowly at his cigar, and seemed lost in thought.

"I hate old things," he said at last. "Nowadays we must go with the times."

"And what does that mean? Gambling, horse-racing, dissipation, and inevitable ruin," Cecil Trevellyn returns. "I for one love all that is old and good. Yonder church stirs me more than the grandest cathedral of modern times. I can see your ancestors going there to worship followed by rustic folks who loved them for their hospitality. I can see them returning to the Grange proud of it, venerating it for the founder's sake, and praying that its walls may never be polluted by the sounds of hoarse, drunken laughter and ribald jests."

These last words stung Lord Richard Hawthorne to the quick.

"I have been wasting my time in talking to you," he said. "Bring your pictures and I will give you money. Money will buy anything, even the pride of a man struggling to hold his own under difficulties."

"Money cannot buy everything," Cecil Trevellyn replied. "It cannot buy even my poor efforts on canvas—at least, your money cannot. Your wealth cannot make you a gentleman in spite of your pedigree; it cannot buy you an honoured name, and it cannot buy Rose Stanfield."

"And this to me, and standing on my own land?" Lord Hawthorne cried, hoarsely.

"Why not?" Cecil Trevellyn said. "You have threatened me with chastisement and insulted me at a time when my most bitter enemy would forget the past and stretch out the hand of sympathy. Wreck the vicar's home as much as you will, plead, threaten, or bluster—the last two are most in your line—but the vicar defies you, and his daughter turns from you as she would turn from a serpent in her path."

Lord Hawthorne breathed heavily, and advancing a step raised his cane.

"Have a care," Cecil Trevellyn cried. "I have but given you a Roland for an Oliver in a wordy war. Do not tempt me to-night, for if there is evil blood in my veins it will turn to fire at your touch."

Scarce had the last word passed his lips when he sees the white cane descending in the dim light.

He feels no blow, but knows that he has been struck, and heavily too, and then he throws himself upon the lord of Mossville. They were both strong and determined men, but the difference between fresh air and exercise against long hours and heavy drinking was soon proved.

Cecil Trevellyn stood with a fragment of walking cane in each hand, and Lord Richard Hawthorne lay prostrate on the ground.

"Lie there and blush for the name you have disgraced," Cecil Trevellyn hissed. "Lie there till I am gone, or I will beat you as you beat your horses—beat you till your howls for mercy bring your servants to see their noble master writhing under a thrashing."

As he hurried swiftly away he thought he

heard a scuffling sound, but his brain was too much in a whirl to pay attention to anything, and at last he found himself back at the vicarage, possessed of the fragments of the walking-cane snatched from Lord Hawthorne's hand.

There was a livid mark on his cheek, and just one spot of blood on his cuff; Cecil heeded nothing however, but threw himself upon his bed and passed a miserable night.

CHAPTER IV.

A WOMAN'S RESOLVE.

The morning found him so pale, haggard, and dejected that he had not the heart to go downstairs, but presently he heard talking below, and the vicar knocked at the door and bade him open it.

Cecil complied, and the Reverend Ransome Stanfield faced him.

"You have not passed all the night here," the vicar said, sternly. "Oh! evil time, would to Heaven that you had never entered this house, but let me to fight the battle."

"I do not understand you," Cecil cried, in alarm. "What has happened?"

"There are men below who command that I give you up," the vicar said. "It is said that you met Lord Hawthorne last night or early this morning and beat him so cruelly that his life is despaired of."

"It is true that I met Lord Hawthorne," Cecil replied. "He insulted me and struck me. I returned the blow, but I call Heaven to witness that I left him little the worse for the encounter. Who are the men who desire to see me?"

"Officers of justice," the vicar said. Cecil Trevellyn felt his brain reel and his strength fail him, but he recovered himself swiftly.

"Has Rose seen them?" he asked.

"No, she went out an hour ago to call on a neighbour," the vicar replied.

"Thank Heaven for that. I am innocent and even—"

"I cannot listen to you," the vicar cried, despairingly. "The mark on your cheek, the broken cane found below, speak for themselves."

Cecil Trevellyn bowed his head in silence and passed out of the room.

He found two constables in the hall and Peter Silch, who cried out:

"That is the man who called at my cottage, and that is the man I met soon after midnight entering the wood."

"I am very sorry, sir," said one of the constables, addressing Cecil, and producing a pair of handcuffs, "but I must do my duty. I hope, sir, there may be some mistake."

"I will go with you quietly," Cecil Trevellyn said, "but I beg you will not disgrace me, an innocent man. Let us go, and you, vicar, will believe me and give me your hand?"

"There is blood on your shirt cuff," the vicar said, "I cannot—I cannot."

The constables had brought no vehicle to convey their prisoner to the lock-up, in fact the officials were rather proud of their charge.

The handcuffs were not brought into use, but the men's fingers itched to take their prisoner by the arm, and yet they refrained, for Cecil was a gentleman, and they trusted to his honour.

Cecil was erect, and if his face was rather pale there was no light of guilt in his noble eyes.

"I suppose," he said, turning suddenly to one of the officers, "I shall not be placed with other criminals?"

"No, sir; you will have a cell to yourself, and I dare say the inspector will grant you the use of a table if you want to write."

"I am satisfied," Cecil said. "Do you mind going to the station by the footpath? It may be the longest way round, but I have no desire to meet Miss Rose Stanfield."

"We will do anything we can to oblige you, sir."

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"I fear my love—"

"I thank you for your kindness, and trust that it will be in my power to reward you before long."

"He is innocent—he is innocent."

Such was Rose Stanfield's cry when she had learned what had happened, and sped swiftly across the park toward Mossville Grange.

The dancing sunlight, the perfumed air, the soft murmuring of the breeze, seemed to mock her misery, and all which had been fair and bright in her eyes was darkened by the awful gloom filling her heart.

"I must be calm, I must and will save him," she said, shaping and smoothing back her ruffled hair. "Lord Hawthorne will not accuse an innocent man of this deed. He will not dare, lying there, perchance never to rise again on this earth, accuse Cecil wrongfully. What if it all be true? What if they met, and from words came to furious blows?"

Her heart grew cold, and she tottered, sinking at the foot of the terrace steps.

A servant saw her and hastening to her assistance led her into the Grange.

There the kindly, grave-faced doctor she knew so well spoke some words of comfort to her.

"My child," he said, "you have come on a useless errand. You must wait patiently. I allow nobody to see Lord Hawthorne but myself and the nurse."

"But he will see me," Rose Stanfield urged, tearfully. "If he ever loved me, vainly as it may be, he will see me now."

"I will see what can be done," the doctor replied, and left the room; he returned in a few minutes and said: "I may be doing wrong, but his lordship is much calmer and he smiled as your name was mentioned and desired to see you."

Rose Stanfield knelt at the wounded man's bedside.

"My lord," she said, in a soft but distinct voice, "I am here to implore you to speak the truth. For God's sake tell me the truth."

"It is written on my battered face," Lord Hawthorne said, faintly. "Cecil Trevellyn, the unmanly wretch, attacked me cruelly. We had a few words in the wood, and he, giving way to his passion, sprang upon me before I could defend myself."

"I cannot believe it. I do not believe it."

"Miss Stanfield," Lord Hawthorne said, "if you have come here simply to give me the lie, when the evidence against your—your artistic and poetical lover—is so conclusive, our interview is at an end."

"Pardon me, my lord," Rose cried, clasping her hands and bowing her head in the intensity of her grief.

"The doctor tells me that I shall recover to see him in a felon's dock," Lord Hawthorne continued. "You cannot respect this man now. You cannot even think of him again with any kindly feeling, but for his sake and for yours I will refuse to prosecute him, and concoct a story that I was attacked after Cecil Trevellyn left me, if—"

"Spare your breath!" Rose cried. "A woman's love and a woman's wit shall yet prevail. Be Cecil Trevellyn guilty or innocent the gulf between you and me, my lord, is wider than ever."

Leaving the hall she went to the police station, and there an affecting interview took place.

"My darling—my wronged darling!" Rose cried, as she threw her arms round Cecil's neck. "What am I to do? What can be done?"

"I am almost weary of thinking," Cecil said, "but, Rose, listen to me. That man Silch, the brick burner, declares he met me. I am positive that if he did something tells me that he had more to do with the outrage than he chooses to tell. Let a watch be placed upon him and the crime may be brought home to him. What say the people outside?"

"Alas! they cannot believe you to be guilty."

"I fear not what the world says, while you, my love—you, my love, found when there seems

to be no hope—are true to me. Go, telegraph to my friend Snelling, and tell him to come at once. Here is his address. And now, Rose, go, and may God guide you and help you to release me from this horrible suspicion."

The little telegraph office of Mossville was very busy that day, and there were people with whom Rose Stanfield had spoken who looked anxiously forward to the night.

Sworn to secrecy two stalwart young fellows had volunteered to accompany the beautiful girl to Silch's home and watch, and ten o'clock found them hidden in the badly-attended garden.

There was but a flickering light in the windows, denoting that a fire was burning, and with fast-beating hearts the watchers crept up and listened.

"I tell you to go to bed," growled the voice of Peter Silch. "I have work to do, and the work is not for your eyes to see."

"I know it," moaned a woman's voice. "Oh! evil was the day when you left honest work. Lord Hawthorne—"

"Hold your tongue!" Silch hissed. "Away, or there will be a real murder instead of half a one."

A despairing cry came from the brick burner's wife's lips, and she said something in an undertone, but what it was Rose and her guardians failed to hear.

At last Peter Silch was alone, and opening a chest he took from it a coarse blouse and commenced to tear it up, casting the fragments at his feet on the floor.

The young blacksmith, one of Rose's confidants, waited to see no more, but dashing out the windows with two blows of a cudgel leaped into the room and threw himself upon Peter Silch and bore him with a crash to the ground.

The brick burner was a powerful ruffian, and had it not been for the young blacksmith's companion he would have escaped, but now he was held powerless, and his pale-faced wife, wringing her hands and kneeling at Rose's feet, implored that the brutal husband might be dealt gently with.

"It is all through poaching," she wailed. "He owed Lord Hawthorne a grudge for prosecuting him. Oh! miss, do not be too hard on him, though he tried to wrong others. I knew that he wanted to burn his blood-stained jacket, and my heart was sick and sore at what had happened."

"That woman is mad!" Peter Silch yelled. "She has been mad for a long time. I tell you she is not accountable for her actions."

His wretched wife sank on her knees, moaning and weeping:

"Oh! forgive me, all of you," she cried. "I—I—don't know what I have been saying. I don't know what I am talking about now."

She sank back in a swoon, and Rose Stanfield, ever tender-hearted, registered a vow in her heart that the poor creature should never know the want of a home.

Day was dawning when a police officer entered the cell in which Cecil Trevellyn was confined, and found the prisoner sleeping as quietly as if he were resting on a bed of down.

"I don't ought to wake him," said the gruff but good-natured man, "but I daresay that he would be glad to know that Silch is safe under lock and key."

Cecil Trevellyn sighed and opened his eyes, and then he heard the news which shed a ray of light in his heart.

"Don't dwell too much on it," the constable said, "and I am speaking to you against orders, but I gave my promise to the young lady that I would. Your counsel will be here by ten o'clock, and you can have a long talk with him."

Mossville was in an uproar, and the news of the fresh arrest was brought to Lord Hawthorne, who moaned uneasily on his bed of pain.

He had but a dim idea of what had taken place after Cecil had left him on the ground, but he remembered seeing a burly man standing over him and feeling several crushing blows, and then all became a blank until he

awoke to learn that he had been found by his keepers and brought to the Grange on a litter.

But he hated Cecil Trevellyn and would reveal nothing, not even when later on he heard that portions of fustian had been found near the place of the outrage, and that the fragments corresponded with pieces missing from Silch's blood-stained jacket.

Both prisoners were taken before the magistrates, and Cecil remanded on bail, for Lord Hawthorne could not attend, and Silch, heavily ironed, was taken back to his cell.

A pale-faced, wretched woman bereft of sense and with her hair streaming wildly, raved and clamoured at the station that she might see her husband.

"He will confess," she cried. "He will tell you where he buried the weapon with which he struck Lord Hawthorne down, not daring to destroy it until night. Oh! let me see him, let me see him."

They treated her very kindly, and the police were soon at work making a thorough search of the brick burner's cottage and premises.

A murderous bludgeon was found hidden under a heap of rubbish, and also a neckerchief stained with blood; and now that Cecil Trevellyn's innocence was as good as confirmed, everybody said they had thought as much all along. Cecil went back to the vicarage and the Reverend Ransome Stanfield, remembering that he had doubted the young man, implored his forgiveness.

"Luck, like misfortune, comes in batches," said Alfred Snelling, as he read a telegram. "Cecil, the rumour of a panic in the City was but an idle report. Upon my honour I will never put trust in newspapers again. Your bankers are solvent."

Little more remains to be told. Peter Silch confessed and was transported. Lord Hawthorne recovered, but he never showed his face in Mossville again after the trial, and one day it was reported on the best authority that he had left for the Continent.

Soon after the bells of Mossville Church rang merrily, and Rose—no longer Rose Stanfield—clung lovingly to her husband's arm, as old folks and children pressed forward to bless her and her husband, Cecil Trevellyn.

NOBLE AT LAST;

OR,

THE HEADSMAN OF ROUEN.

(AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.)

CHAPTER XI.

A MESSENGER OF MERCY.

THE odds against the executioner were as five to one, but he was fortunately enabled to glide into an angle between two walls before they could altogether surround him, and he soon found that he had to deal but with vulgar swordsmen of the barracks.

Nevertheless, their united fury was bidding fair to put his best fencing qualities to the test, when the sudden arrival of Raoul, his page, created a timely diversion in his favour. The lad, at Judith's instance, had taken the precaution of following his master from the house. He now lost no time in attacking and wounding one of the cowardly assailants from the rear, at the same time calling out to the hard-pressed Gaultier some words which the others could not understand.

But at this moment another person rushed upon the scene, administering a reeling blow to the page, whom he evidently mistook for one of the would-be assassins, and scattering the others right and left by the sturdy vigour of his interference, but chiefly by the sound of his voice,

which they seemed at once to recognise and respect.

"What! six against one?" cried the newcomer. "Cowardly hirelings! back to your dens, I say!"

"It is the executioner, my lord! the dauphin's base-born tool!" said one of the combatants, all of whom desisted reluctantly from their evil intentions, while Gaultier coolly remained upon his guard. "It is the headsman, and yonder is his page!"

"Ha! is it so?" cried Bertrand—for the newcomer was he—now for the first time recognising the towering executioner.

"The same, my lord!" responded Gaultier, ironically. "Come, come! bound on your wolves of Malmaison again! Why do you hesitate, since at last you recognise me?"

"You mistake, sir!" said the viscount, haughtily, but not without embarrassment. "I summon not such odds against a single man. These are my followers, truly, but their purpose here in Rouen—"

"Ha! it was to waste their desperation, then, upon yon prison-walls, to pluck a prisoner thence, that you have summoned them?" cried Gaultier, frowning in his pause.

De Chanzy bowed.

"But you're forestalled, my lord!" continued Gaultier, who was better informed than at the outset from the few words that Raoul had called out to him in foreign dialect.

"An angry mob already girts the castle gates; do you not see their torches? mark their shouts!"

"Ay, the maddened populace, at instigation of my agents, storm the walls to free the imprisoned demoiselle whose death's decreed! These, my personal followers, were thither bound to aid in the attack, when sight of you diverted their intention."

"Not so!" cried Gaultier. "Yonder mob is not inspired by any means of yours, but by your hated foe. Hugo de Borne now leads you mad assault—his hoped-for prize the captive demoiselle herself!"

"Hugo le Rouge?" exclaimed the viscount, starting back.

"The same! The crafty dauphin lured him to the deed while secretly strengthening the castle walls. You're cunningly forestalled, my lord, in desperation as in folly of design."

"Never!" cried Bertrand, waving his rapier frantically. "Follow me, my men! We'll make a common cause against the gates, and then be his the lily-prize that wins her front to front. On, on!"

He dashed away in the direction of the prison, followed by his band.

"How now, my lad! art wounded?" said the executioner, when left alone with Raoul.

"Nay, nay, my master!" was the cheering reply. "It was but with the pommel of his sword the viscount struck me."

"His desperate straits should pardon him the blow. How didst learn the information of this mad attack? But 'tis no matter now. We must but wait a little while until the gates are cleared."

"Ay, the governor was forewarned—the castle is impregnable. But let us venture nearer, sir, and watch the scene."

Gaultier and his page advanced cautiously toward the scene of disturbance, and finally installed themselves within the shadow of a neighbouring archway, whence they could overlook it, without being observed themselves.

The attack was neither so important or formidable as it had seemed at first. But few of the rioters appeared to be citizens of the town. A hundred or so of the De Coucy retainers, together with a sprinkling of desperate personal adherents, had been rallied to the midnight attack by Hugo de Borne, who, probably under the impression that he could win the fair prize that had been lost to his murdered kinsman, had either been secretly urged to the attempt of liberating her in the furtherance of some strange, underhand scheme of the dauphin, or led to make it under a misapprehension of the strength of the castle's garrison.

The disciplined men-at-arms, with the governor at their head, were already charging like destroying phalanxes through and through the irregular ranks of the assailants; torches rose and fell, cries of panic resounded under the bastions; and even before Bertrand, with his little band of Gascon mountaineers from Malmaison, could participate in the assault, it was put to an end, and the rioters were taking flight in every direction.

But the entire city had been more or less aroused by the revolt, and Gaston and his page were compelled to linger in their place of concealment for nearly an hour before the neighbourhood resumed its ordinarily deserted appearance.

"Attend me now, good Raoul, and tarry at the prison gates till I return," at last said Gaultier, suddenly quitting the friendly archway, followed by his page.

The vaulted ante-room of the prison, as he entered it unattended, presented an appearance very different from what he had remarked at his previous visit.

Many of the guards who had been wounded in the encounter were having their hurts attended to upon benches at the sides; men-at-arms, flushed from their petty victory, were noisily striding to and fro and clanking their weapons upon the stone floor, or boasting of their deeds over great flagons of cheap wine, which the governor had caused to be broached in honour of the occasion; and that august personage himself, surrounded by turnkeys, jailers, and other admiring satellites, was conversing rather excitedly in the small, office-like apartment between the main ante-chamber and the head of the corridor leading to the cells.

He looked up in surprise, and even a little suspiciously, when Gaston Gaultier presented himself, and in his usually quiet, dignified manner, preferred a request to be shown at once to the dungeon occupied by the condemned prisoner, Gabrielle de Montfort.

"Why, you visited her a short time ago, Sir Executioner," exclaimed the governor.

"True, Sir Governor, and not without excellent service to the State resulting therefrom," was Gaultier's quiet reply, accompanied by a glance at the jailer who had escorted him.

The governor looked even more surprised. The jailer trembled and paled with an appealing look at the executioner; for not only his dismissal but severe punishment in addition would follow the public information of the pious of poison having been found in the possession of the condemned.

"The service was a slight one, but nevertheless necessary," said Gaultier, evasively.

"What was it?" demanded the governor, frowning.

The jailer trembled more violently.

"I merely wrung from the condemned a confession that Monsieur le Vicomte de Chanzy was planning her rescue, the attack to be made to-night," said Gaston.

The jailer, apparently relieved of an agonising suspense, rewarded him with a grateful look.

"The deuce! But the attack, which has just been so easily disposed of, was conducted by that great ass, Hugo le Rouge—the kinsman of the very man for whose murder Mademoiselle de Montfort is condemned to die!" cried the governor. "Whether the fellow is mad or in love I know not, but by my faith! were it not that he's in favour with Monseigneur le Dauphin, I'd—No matter; his bull-headed imprudence will lead him to destruction soon enough."

"I was already aware of this, Sir Governor, but not the less am fain to think that I have wrought some service," said Gaultier, who was too much of a diplomat not to be able to prevaricate and speak the truth with equal calmness and emergency. "I met the viscount on my way hither. Scarcely less desperate was he in this enterprise than madcap Hugo's self—although a feud has long raged high between their factions—and a band of sturdy mountaineers from Malmaison were at his beck. But I persuaded him the project was as foolish as impracticable. Otherwise he might have se-

conded the ill-advised attack upon the gates, perchance with varying result."

"Not so; the castle could defy the city in revolt!" exclaimed the governor. "But you have my thanks, Sir Executioner. Wherefore would you visit the doomed demoiselle again and at this hour?"

"Upon most urgent duty, I assure you," said Gaston, hesitatingly.

"Methinks your duty but begins upon the scaffold at the break of day."

"Sir Governor, you must know that custom privileges the Public Executioner to visit the condemned at his discretion during the twelve hours preceding an execution," said Gaultier, who shrank from informing the governor of the proposition he was about to make to Gabrielle; inasmuch as he was by no means certain that it would be accepted, even with death as the alternative.

"Custom is not law, sir," said the governor, haughtily. "A holy confessor is the only visitor that mademoiselle will need; and he will come an hour before your offices are required."

"Grant me a moment in private, Sir Governor," said Gaston, who saw that he would have to surrender his secret in order to attain his end. "I promise you to convince you of the urgency and necessity of granting my request at once."

With considerable reluctance, the governor signed the rest to quit the room. A moment later, with no diminution of his surprise, but with much more gravity and respectfulness of demeanour, he summoned Antoine, the jailer, whose reputation had been saved by Gaston's magnanimity, and directed him to conduct the visitor again to the dungeon of Mademoiselle de Montfort, and to subject himself to his orders.

It was probably well for our hero that this preliminary interruption to his second interview with the unhappy demoiselle occurred, inasmuch as it enabled him to arrange his ideas, regain the thoroughness of his self-possession, and otherwise prepare himself for the struggle that he felt was before him.

As he followed his conductor along the gloomy gallery, however, he could not but contrast his present perturbed and tender emotions with those, the outcome of ambitious greed alone, which had attended his errand of but a short time before.

"Close the door behind me when I enter, and tarry outside," he whispered, as they once more stood before the entrance to the condemned cell.

Antoine, the jailer, bowed respectfully. Once more the great bolts were silently withdrawn, again the massive portal swung noiselessly open.

Gaston glided into the cell, and the door closed behind him, this time with a slight sound, which betrayed his presence to the prisoner.

(To be Continued.)

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

OLD LONDON AT NIGHT.—All the social pictures of the days of Anne and of the first two Georges exhibit a state of police much worse than the days of Elizabeth. London was then a prey not only to daring thieves, but to swaggering bullies and hired assassins, who had lost the old salutary terror of the Star Chamber, and despised the ordinary administration of justice. In the time of Charles II. Dryden was waylaid and beaten by a gang of ruffians hired by Rochester, as he walked home from Will's coffee-house to Gerard Street. This was a solitary case. But the "Spectator" has left us the unquestionable evidence of the existence of the "Mohocks." "An outrageous ambition of doing all possible hurt to their fellow-creatures is the great cement of their assembly, and the only qualification required in their members.

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and link- thorns b- Westmin- the coach- with it- the pro- in Lor- rally ho- But the- The city- was four- thieves a- Lighting- the glori- gress thr- a mornin- driven a- upon you- a twinkl- But we- faint lam- he still- the lim- the lam- reeling g- ing. Th- 1830. It- tion more- mere cor- was descri- of Sir R- tolerable- burglary- spection- vigilant h- thirty ye- wonderfu- plotted to- turned fr- waymen- immediat- rode thro- to stop th-

STRAN- incident- tures of a- recording- among et- addressed- cheque or- short of a- reaching- stopped- heard of i- prie of- cheque, it- letter, by- found ad- Thames o- engineeri- messenger- Street, di- carried wit- a week's s- of ice, an- Deptford- The Pri- cumstances- medical a- the doctor- a memor- who prove- surviving- pistols till- were press- her death- Antiquari- Edinburgh- coffee, but- Sr. V- following- nection w- bration.

In order to exert this principle in its full strength and perfection, they take care to drink themselves to a pitch that is beyond the possibility of attending to any motions of reason or humanity, then make a general rally, and attack all that are so unfortunate as to walk the streets through which they patrol. Some are knocked down, others stabbed, others cut and carbonaded."

About 1738 was the age of flambeaux and linkboys. London had only still its lanterns here and there, and its few glass lamps. Westminster was perhaps worse provided. But the coach rolled from the theatre and the ball with its liveried torch-bearers; and even the present century has seen flambeaux in London. A solitary linkboy generally hovered about the theatres and taverns. But the age of lamps was really approaching. The city became vigorous in lighting, when it was found that severity did little against the thieves; and the Westminster Paving and Lighting Act was passed in 1762. Then came the glories of the old lamp-lighters—the progress through each district to trim the wicks in a morning—and the terrible slurry, with ladder driven against your breast, and soil showered upon your head, as twilight approached. What a twinkling then was there through the streets. But we were proud of our lamps. Beneath the faint lamp alight the watchman; or if he walked, he still walked with his lantern; and the linkboy, yet a needful auxiliary to the lamp and the lantern, guided the reeling gentleman from his tavern to his lodging. The old system of watching lasted till 1830. It is impossible to conceive any institution more unfitted for the demands of society, more corrupt, more inefficient; in a word, as it was described by all parties before the passing of Sir Robert Peel's Police Act, it was an intolerable nuisance. The serious matters of burglary and street robbery were left to the inspection of the officers of Bow Street, and very vigilant had these functionaries been for some thirty years. . . . The face of things had been wonderfully changed since the London thieves plotted to stop Queen Anne's coach as she returned from supper in the city; and since highwaymen committed robberies in noonday in the immediate vicinity of the capital, and slowly rode through the villages without anyone daring to stop them.

STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A CHEQUE.—One incident of the snow-storm, the strange adventures of a cheque for £1,000, is, perhaps, worth recording. On the evening of January 18th, among other letters put up for posting, was one addressed to a house in Glasgow, containing a cheque on the Bank of England for a sum little short of one thousand pounds. The cheque, not reaching its destination in due course, was stopped at the bank, and nothing more was heard of it till January 25th, when, to the surprise of the merchants who had issued the cheque, it was brought back, with the missing letter, by a police inspector, it having been found adhering to a block of ice floating in the Thames off Deptford, in front of Messrs. Penn's engineering works. It is presumed that the messenger, in making the letters to Lombard Street, dropped some, and that this one was carted with the snow into the Thames; and, after a week's immersion, was found frozen to a block of ice, and it was taken by the bearer to the Deptford police station.

THE PRISONER OF BURMA.—It is an affecting circumstance that Burns, unable to remunerate his medical attendant in the usual manner, asked the doctor's acceptance of his pair of pistols as a memorial of their friendship. Dr. Maxwell, who proved a generous friend to the poor bard's surviving widow and children, retained these pistols till his death in 1834, after which they were preserved for some years by his sister. On her death they were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, in whose museum in Edinburgh they are now kept in an elegant coffer, but open to the inspection of the public.

ST. VALENTINE.—Alban Butler gives the following account of this saint and of his connection with our popular Valentine's Day celebration. Valentine, it is stated, was a priest at

Rome, who, with St. Marius and his family, assisted in the persecution under Claudius the Second. He was apprehended, and sent by the Emperor to the Prefect of Rome; who, on finding all his promises to make him renounce his faith ineffectual, commended him to be beaten with clubs, and afterwards to be beheaded, which was executed about the 14th of February, about the year 270. Pope Julius the First is said to have built a church near Porte Mole to his memory, which for a long time gave name to the gate, now called Porta del Popolo, formerly Porta Valentini. . . . To abolish the heathen's lewd superstitious custom of boys drawing the names of girls, in honour of their goddess, Februata Juno, on the 15th of this month, several zealous pastors substituted the names of saints in billets given on this day (Feb. 14).

OLD VALENTINE CUSTOM.—Misson, a traveller in the early part of the last century, gives an interesting account of the Valentine ceremonial. On the eve of St. Valentine's Day, he says, the young folks in England and Scotland, by a very ancient custom, celebrate a little festival. An equal number of maids and bachelors get together; each writes their true or some feigned name upon separate billets, which they roll up, and draw by way of lots, the maids taking the men's billets, and the men the maids', so that each of the young men lights upon a girl that he calls his valentine, and each of the girls upon a young man whom she calls hers. By this means each has two valentines. . . . The valentines give balls and treats to their mistresses, wear their billets upon their bosoms or sleeves, and this little sport often ends in love.

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.—English people who for many generations have enjoyed that delightful collection of tales "The Arabian Nights Entertainments" may be interested in learning its origin. The collection came to us from the hands of a French savant of the seventeenth century, who obtained it in its original form during a long residence in the East. Antoine Galland, born of poor parents in 1646, showed such talents in early life that he not only obtained a finished education, but received an appointment as attaché to the French embassy at Constantinople. He devoted himself to oriental travel, the collection of oriental literature, and the study of Eastern authors. Of all his learned and laborious works the editing and publication of the "Mille et une Nuits" is that by which he is now best remembered. The large edition of "The Arabian Nights" by Lane—himself a traveller and orientalist—is now esteemed the best.

EVE OF ST. AGNES.—The feast of St. Agnes (Jan. 21) was formerly held in Merry England as in a special degree a holiday for women. It was thought possible for a girl on the eve of St. Agnes to obtain by divination a knowledge of her future husband. She might take a row of pins, and plucking them out one after another, stick them in her sleeve, singing meanwhile a paternoster; and this insure that her dreams would that night present the person in question. Lying down on her back that night, with her hands under her head, the anxious maiden was led to expect that her future spouse would appear in a dream and salute her with a kiss! On this superstition Keats founded his beautiful poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes," a picture of which, by Mr. Dicksee, was in the Royal Academy Exhibition a season or two ago.

A CUP OF TEA.—No article on tea, says the "Globe," could omit mention of Dr. Johnson and his great partiality for that beverage. In his review of Hanway's "Book on Tea," he proclaims himself as "a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who has for many years diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant; whose kettle has scarcely time to cool; who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning. Boswell says that he supposes no one ever enjoyed the fragrant leaf with more relish than Johnson. It is related of him, but not by Boswell, that whilst on his Scotch tour, the Dowager Lady Macleod, having repeatedly helped him until she had poured out sixteen cups,

then asked him if a small basin would not be more agreeable, and save him trouble. "I wonder, madame," he answered, roughly, "why all the ladies should ask me such questions. It is to save themselves trouble, madame, and not me." Greker mentions that the doctor's teapot held two quarts.

BLACK MAIL AND THE RHINE.—The Rhine, on approaching Bingen and Assmannshausen, is truly "the constellated Rhine." The castle of Falkenberg stands on the summit of a rocky spur of the hill, and a little further up on the same bank is the castle of Rheinstein. Most of these residences of knightly highwaymen fell before the strong arm of the law in 1282, having been condemned as robber strongholds. They were sentenced by the Diet of the Empire. An anecdote well illustrates the state of things. An archbishop of Cologne having built a castle appointed a seneschal to the command of it. The governor, previous to entering upon his office, applied to the bishop to know how and whence he was to maintain himself, no revenue having been assigned to him for that purpose. The prelate by way of answer merely desired him to observe that his castle stood close to the junction of four roads. A practice resembling the "black mail," exacted by the Highland chiefs from merchants on their way to and from the fairs and markets of the north.

A REMARKABLE DOG.—A blind beggar was in the habit, some years since, of frequenting the Pont des Sts. Peres, where he used to station himself with a clarionet and a very intelligent poodle. The place was well chosen, and charitable contributions poured into the little wooden bowl which the dog held in its mouth. One day the blind man, who had reached an advanced age, was unable to be seen. He had fallen ill, in fact, and was unable to pursue his avocation. His faithful companion, however, continued to frequent the accustomed spot, and the passers-by, to whom he was familiar, understood that his master was unwell, and touched by his fidelity, dropped their pennies into his bowl in increased numbers. After a while the beggar went the way of all flesh—an event which the wily poodle kept to himself until he also became an absentee from the Pont des Sts. Peres. His disappearance produced a great sensation among his numerous patrons, and a search was prosecuted, when the poor animal was found lying dead in a cellar near his former master's abode, a sum of twenty thousand francs in bonds of the Orleans Railway being discovered under the litter on which he was stretched.

SELF-WINDING CLOCKS.—A clock-maker of Copenhagen, named Louis Soenderberg, who for some time past has had charge of that city's electric time-keepers, has just invented an ingenious appliance which obviates the necessity of winding up the regulator, from which the clocks in question "take their time." By a mechanical contrivance which periodically cuts off the stream of electric fluid emanating from the battery, and brings an electric magnet to bear upon the relaxed mainspring in such a way as to renew its tension instantaneously, perpetual motion is practically imparted to the works of the regulator—that is to say, as long as the batteries connected with it are kept properly supplied with acids. The discoverer of this important improvement has satisfied himself, by six months' successful experiments in his own workshops, that his system works faultlessly, and has applied for permission to adapt it to the electric clocks set up by the municipality in different parts of the Danish capital. Electricity, under Mr. Soenderberg's compulsion, is destined not only to make the Copenhagen clocks go, but to wind them up, with never-ending recurrence, until the "crack of doom."

RUSSIAN LADIES. It is said, always wear in winter-time fur next to the skin, as in consequence of the intense cold no ordinary merino or flannel is sufficient. Lynx is most frequently used, and every young Russian bride has one or two under-garments in this fur, and then is considered set up in life.



[OVERHEARD.]

MY BEST FRIEND.

ONE evening a note came for mamma from our rich neighbour, Mr. Ogilvie.

"CAN I see you?" it said, "on a matter of importance? If I can, would to-morrow be convenient?"

Mamma replied in the affirmative, and named two o'clock; and then we fell to wondering, as women will, what he wanted.

"Perhaps it is about Miss Perkins," I said, finally, after hazarding a dozen other conjectures. "The principal of the academy, they tell me, wishes to get rid of her. He has a sister-in-law for whom he covets the place, and he has accused Miss Perkins of inefficiency, and has brought some of the trustees over to his way of thinking."

"I don't know I'm sure," said mamma, but she seemed pre-occupied, and so the subject dropped.

When we parted for the night I went to my chamber window, and began wondering again about Mr. Ogilvie and his letter. The full moon was in the sky. It looked just like it had on the night when the tragedy of my life culminated; and I soon forgot my conjectures and Mr. Ogilvie in recalling the suffering of that time.

This had been two years ago, when I was eighteen. All my troubles had come together—

my father's death, the loss of our fortune, the wreck of my girlish dream.

I had loved Leonard Balliol my whole life. We had been children together. To give him up implied the overthrow and rooting out of nearly every association of the past. Oh! the unworthy, selfish motives which had actuated him.

I had made him a hero, he was but clay after all, and the coarsest of clay. For it was my father's pecuniary reverses that had caused him to abandon me. Nor had he had the poor courage to come and tell me the truth himself.

He was absent from London when my father died, and I received at first a tender, affectionate letter from him. He wrote that he would return as soon as he possibly could, his presence might prove perhaps a comfort in my grief. So I counted the days till his arrival.

But the time he had set went by; he neither came nor wrote. Then I learned that he was in town, had been there several days; then he had gone away again—gone without so much as sending me a single word!

You comprehend. He had been met on his return by the news that my father had died insolvent, and that we were ruined.

My mother had known almost as little about my father's affairs as I did. My father had been a large shipowner, and we had lived surrounded by every luxury that wealth could afford.

In one of the few lucid intervals during his

brief illness papa had chosen old Mr. Balliol, Leonard's uncle, as his executor. In certain ways Mr. Balliol had been connected with him in business; but I do not understand how.

Papa told us that though just then his matters were in a complicated state there would be enough left to make us all comfortable, even rich; but before he had been a fortnight in his grave we learned that we had nothing left, save the income of a small property which belonged to my mother.

Mr. Balliol himself told us in his hard, cold fashion. He did not even affect sympathy or commiseration, he flung off completely the veil of pretence he had worn during my father's life.

Mamma told me that he had always known he hated us in his heart. When she was a girl he had wanted to marry her, and she had refused him. My father had been ignorant of this, and had believed in his friendship.

It was Mr. Balliol too who came to tell me that Leonard desired to be released from his engagement. It was the very morning I had heard that Leonard had been for several days in town.

In the prostration of my grief for my father this new blow seemed only to stun and paralyse me. I knew what such conduct on Leonard's part must mean, I realised it fully, and if I had doubted, Mr. Balliol came that very day to confirm it.

He did not try for delicate phrases; he did not even show the courtesy of asking after my mother, who had been ill in bed ever since the funeral.

He rose when I appeared and frowned blackly at me from under his heavy eyebrows. This was my second interview with him; the first he had requested, in order to inform me that we were utterly ruined. He had attempted no circumlocution then, he did not now.

"I have come to you on a painful errand, Miss Osgood," he said; "but you have so much good sense that I am sure you will meet me half way. Leonard has been in town and gone away again."

"So I heard this morning," I answered, seating myself opposite him.

"Ah, you had heard—well, then I daresay you have a pretty clear idea what my business is."

"Something in regard to him I suppose, from what you have just said," I replied.

"Why, yes. I'm a plain man, Miss Osgood—I can't beat about the bush—I don't believe it ever does any good," he continued, eyeing me savagely, as if my composure disappointed and vexed him.

"I agree with you," I answered. "Please tell me plainly what your business is with me."

"Ah, that's right. You're a sensible young woman. Well, my nephew tells me there was a sort of—a sort of boy and girl attachment between you and him."

He paused, not from embarrassment, but in the hope that now I would show some trace of feeling.

"Your nephew and I were engaged," I said; "the fact is no more a secret to you than to my own family."

"Well, no—no—I never regarded it as a serious engagement—girl and boy fancies are slight things, Miss Osgood—they seldom come to anything," he said, quickly. "Now Leonard was quite upset—quite so—but, you see, under the circumstances, of course, all that youthful—what shall I call it?—romance—yes, romance, must be put aside. I am sure you see this—so clear-headed as you are."

And now he stared more keenly at me, but I went on with my work, some embroidery I had taken up, as I said:

"You are not speaking plainly yet, Mr. Balliol. Have you come to tell me that your nephew wishes to be released from his engagement?"

"Well, well, that is a harsh way to put it."

"Yes or no?" said I, rising.

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"Yes," he said, snappishly.

"Then tell your nephew he is free."

"That's right—that's wise. You see, Leonard is dependent on me—new in his profession—"

"These are family details which do not concern me," I interrupted, quietly. "You have my answer, Mr. Balliol."

"Yes—yes—but I want you to understand that Leonard—"

Again I interrupted him.

"I understand everything—I understand you both," I said. "I need not detain you any longer."

He looked fairly murderous with baffled rage.

I stood waiting for him to go. He got up heavily, muttering to himself, and crossed the room.

"Good day," he said, barely turning his head towards me.

I only bowed in response, and he went out, closing the door with a bang. In a moment he opened it again and called in a harsh, triumphant tone:

"I forgot to tell you—you will have to move next week—the creditors won't wait any longer, there's to be an auction in the house."

I only bowed again. He disappeared.

The stony lethargy which locked my senses did not yield for weeks. I went quietly about my duties, for everything devolved on me, and nothing was neglected. As soon as my mother could travel we removed to a little cottage which she owned in the outskirts of a pretty village, among the Berkshire hills, taking with us such relics from our old home as we were permitted to claim.

Fortunately my mother's little fund was settled on herself and children; it could not be touched, nor could she give it up from any mistaken womanly scruples.

The ensuing two years had passed very quietly. I think my mother would have been content if she could have been at ease about the future of the boys.

That troubled her, for we were very, very poor. The neighbours were kind to us. Neither my mother nor I was one to be morbid. We made the best of things as bravely as we could.

The Mr. Ogilvie who had written the note owned a fine country-seat in the neighbourhood, and spent the greater portion of his time there.

He was growing elderly, but his genial spirits and cultivated mind made him a most agreeable companion; and though a bachelor, his house was always the headquarters of every plan for the amusement of the young folk.

He soon became a frequent visitor at our cottage—grew, indeed, the most intimate friend we possessed, and his thoughtful kindness to us was beyond all praise.

He appeared on the succeeding afternoon at the hour my mother had appointed. I was busy in the schoolroom with the children's lessons. The interview lasted so long that I had sent the little ones out to play a good while before mamma came up. She was so pale and agitated that I feared Mr. Ogilvie had brought evil tidings.

"What is it?" I cried, in dismay.

"Good news, at least, to me, darling," she said. "But I do not know what you will think."

She looked at me hesitatingly, then added:

"My dear, Mr. Ogilvie wants to marry you."

Mr. Ogilvie want to marry me! I was so surprised that for a time my mind had no room for any other sensation. Then I knew that it could never be; knew it as well as if I had spent months in earnest deliberation.

I suppose I looked white and troubled, for I saw mamma's face change; but she only said:

"He will come and see you to-morrow. You cannot talk about it now. One thing, I shall not try to influence you, my darling. You must decide what will be for your own happiness."

Mr. Ogilvie came the next day, and my mother left me to see him alone.

I was nervous when he first entered the room, but his gentleness and composure soon caused

that to pass, though the sharp, bitter pain remained at my heart.

I saw and appreciated thoroughly his noble qualities, and the thought of the disappointment I must bring to his hopes hurt me cruelly, made me feel hard and wicked too, though I knew that was morbid and unmerited.

I thought as I looked at him that he was a man of whose affection any woman might be proud and grateful. It was the face of a man who had never in his life committed an action for which he need blush.

The bold, regular features were not so striking because they were unusually handsome, though they were that, as from the evidences of intellect in the broad forehead, the strength and purpose of will in every line; but the countenance owned a higher attraction still, that of purity and goodness—so beautiful a smile I never saw on any other human lips.

I should be wrong to say that the worldly advantages he could offer did not weigh with me. They had great weight, and they ought to have had, not from mere selfish motives, but on account of my mother and the children.

I had spent nearly the whole night in earnest reflection, but my mental combat ended where it began.

I could not marry him. It was not only that I had no love to give, it was that I loved another man!

He sat down beside me and said:

"Your mother has told you why I have come. I did not want you to be taken completely by surprise. I knew you had never thought of this—I have tried hard to keep my secret, because I feared that to speak earlier would interfere with your really learning to know me. I am forty-five years old. For me to talk to you about love in the way a young man might would make me absurd. But believe me, Elinor, no man ever had a sincerer respect and admiration or a warmer affection for a woman than I have for you."

"Please, please," I exclaimed. I was suddenly so near a burst of tears that I could only utter these pleading words.

He grew a little pale, but his voice was steady, as he asked:

"Then it seems to you that it cannot be?"

I shook my head. He sat silent, looking at me thoughtfully, kindly, till I had mastered my agitation enough to speak.

"I am so grateful to you," I answered. "I feel honoured, knowing the man that you are—but I cannot—I cannot!"

Then I broke down and wept a little, and he soothed me as patiently as if he had been my brother.

"Don't make me think that I distress you," he said. "I would not do that for the world! Elinor, perhaps it is too soon for you to decide—you have not had time to reflect."

"No reflection could change anything," I replied, sadly. "Wait—I want to tell you the whole."

I had to stop again. It was so difficult to explain.

"Perhaps I can help you," he said. "Your mother told me yesterday that you had had a girlish attachment; but she believed that it was over."

"No," I answered, "it is not—I am ashamed to own it—but it is as strong as ever. I know the man was mercenary. I know he did not possess the noble qualities with which I fancied him endowed; but that has changed nothing. I feel that I am lacking in womanly dignity and self-respect. But even that does not enable me to call my heart back."

He was so good and kind that having got over the worst it was easy now to continue. I told him the whole story.

His sympathy for me was as great as the generosity which enabled him to put by his own pain and strive to comfort me. I could not have believed it would be so; but sorry as I felt for him the being able, for the first time in these two weary years, to speak freely was an inexpressible relief; for in order to spare my poor mother I had shut my secret so carefully from

her eyes that she honestly thought I had outlived both my love and my suffering.

We talked for a long while and at last he said:

"Will you try to forget that I am the man who has asked you to marry him—to remember only that I am your friend—anxious for your peace and happiness?"

"You are too good to me—too good," I sighed.

"I could not be," he answered, with his beautiful smile. "Elinor, you are a very brave, honest woman. Much as I esteemed you I never really did you justice till now."

"Oh, I am a poor, weak creature," I cried, impatiently. "I despise myself—yes, I do—nothing can be more contemptible than to love a man whom I cannot respect."

"Nor do I think you will long," he said. "I believe that even now it is the wasted affection not the man, whom you regret."

"I do not regret him," I cried. "If he were to come back to-day I should bid him go! My trust is dead—my respect is dead—but the love stays—forgive me, I must show you all the truth."

He promised to tell my mother. It was selfish of me I knew to let him do this for me. But he offered, and I was so shaken that I could not bring myself to talk with her yet.

On the following morning I received a long letter from him; and I think a more beautiful one was never written. It put the whole case very clearly before me. His arguments were so conclusive that it seemed to me he must be right.

He told me that he would be content with esteem and liking. I felt that those I could give most heartily already. He believed—and for the time almost made me believe—that my solitary life had caused the old love to keep its hold; that it was in reality a sentiment totally separated from the man who had primarily been its object.

He believed that if I knew there was a person in whom I could trust, whose dearest care in life was my happiness, it might give me new sources of thought, and that gradually new hopes and aims might grow up in my mind.

He entreated me to leave matters as they were for six months; to come to no decision; to confide all to time. At the expiration of that period I could give an answer free and unbiased as if he had not already spoken. I was to be bound in no way. I could regard him as my friend—that and nothing more.

So much at least I could grant; so much I owed in return for his kindness; and I hoped, oh! so heartily, that time might prove he was right. He held a long conversation with my mother. She was, as ever, goodness itself from first to last.

It was not till after many weeks, and then by accident, that she allowed me to learn that Mr. Ogilvie had gained one promise from her, which was that, however I might decide, the future of the two boys was to be his care—and this he wanted kept from me.

That was a very pleasant summer, and not to me alone, for the whole neighbourhood united in saying the same, and all admitted that it was chiefly owing to Mr. Ogilvie's exertions.

He had a succession of visitors at his house, all of them persons worth knowing—the nicest class of what are called society people—and, besides, a number of noted men and women from among the artistic and literary professions.

Mr. Ogilvie found occupation enough. One of the first matters he attended to was the settlement of Agnes Perkins's difficulties. They had resulted in her triumph, and Agnes was now one of the principals of the establishment.

She became a frequent guest at Mr. Ogilvie's house, where she was treated with as much deference as if she had been an heiress.

And I was happy—yes, I was. Sometimes I roused up enough to be astonished at the fact. I cannot say that I thought much when the most important thing in my future was concerned. I saw this occasionally and grew remorseful.

But Mr. Ogilvie seemed always to under-

stand when one of these moods came upon me, and invariably took means to make me forget it.

I made one really intimate female friend, Agnes Perkins. I learned to love and respect her next to my mother. Such a union of gentleness and decision, of womanly softness and masculine courage, I have never seen.

She was a good deal older than I—almost thirty, though she did not look it; and life had been far from gracious to her; yet she was invariably cheerful, and I used to tell mamma that to spend an hour in her company was like breathing mountain air.

My poor words can give no idea of what Mr. Ogilvie was to me during this season, how perfect his behaviour, what a mingling of respectful admiration and brotherly tenderness. I cannot write even this poor, bald sentence without staining the page with grateful tears.

Never but once did he do a thing which caused me even to wish he had not, as out of keeping with his character. One day at a picnic, when I had got away into the wood by myself for a little and paused near the place where he and Agnes were standing I heard him ask her:

"Did you know Leonard Balliol, then?"

"Oh, yes, well," she replied. "I was his little sister's governess for two years."

I hurried away without their discovering me. For a time I was somewhat annoyed. Mr. Ogilvie had been talking of me. That he should do so, even with Agnes, disturbed me. But after awhile I saw the injustice of my rather harsh reflections. It did not follow from these words that he had discussed my affairs.

He had a perfect right—indeed he was wise under the circumstances—to learn everything he could in regard to the man who stood between him and his hopes—an unworthy man, from every thought of whom it was his duty to try and wean me if he desired to be faithful to the friendship he had promised.

The summer passed. The autumn followed. I woke up suddenly to the fact that the appointed season of probation had almost elapsed. Soon Mr. Ogilvie would come to me for my answer. And I?

For weeks and weeks I had not reflected. I really believed that when the time came I should lay my hand in his and trust myself to his guidance. But when I was roused to reflection, ah! then I knew I was as far from being able conscientiously to grant what he wanted as on the day when he first surprised me by his demand.

Mr. Ogilvie was absent. He had gone to London on business and would remain there for a month; when he came back I should have to decide. Only a month! Just after his departure the newspaper brought the announcement of old Mr. Balliol's death, and the memories aroused thereby proved to me just where I stood.

It seemed very hard; but I plainly saw what I must do. I could not marry him—I could not. The old love was just as strong as ever. Argue, struggle as I might, there it was. No human being could more heartily have upbraided my weakness, my despicable weakness, than I; but self-reproach changed nothing—I loved Leonard Balliol still.

The days and the weeks went by—oh, how fast they flew! As the hard moment drew nearer and nearer I grew more afraid. It wrung my heart with a pang as bitter as it had ever known to think of the pain I must give my good, generous friend. But there was no escape. I dared not marry him—it would be a sin.

Every kind, cheerful epistle I received from him left me more miserable, and answering them became more and more difficult. One afternoon I was sitting in my room when a servant entered and told me that Mr. Ogilvie was downstairs. I had not expected him for nearly a week yet, and the surprise and shock turned me absolutely faint and blind.

He had come to repeat his question—oh! how was I to answer it? I will admit that I longed to go to him and say yes without giving myself time to think. The worldly advantages weighed with me. It seemed madness to lead a life of actual privation in many ways, con-

sidering the manner in which I had been reared, when affluence, position, all the good that the world most prizes was offered me.

It was harder still to deprive myself of the counsels and companionship which were so sweet to me, were such a rest and support. But I could not—I could not. Even if after telling him the whole truth he still pleaded, declared himself not afraid, I dared not accept his hand—I dared not.

It was worse than useless to stop there in solitude, raging over my own folly, frightened by my own thoughts. Each instant's delay rendered my task more difficult. I hurried downstairs. I reached the door of the room where he was waiting.

With my hand on the lock I paused. I had a mind to run away and send him word that I could not appear, or to write, and so avoid an interview.

But he had heard my step. He opened the door suddenly, took my two hands and drew me into the room.

I could not speak at first. I shook from head to foot. I think I should have fallen if I had not chanced to see a chair close beside me, and sunk blindly into it.

"What, not a word?" he said, pleasantly. "I surprised you. I am sorry. It was wrong of me. Your mother wrote to me that you had not seemed well of late."

"I—I think I have not been," I faltered. He looked somewhat pale and worn; but, oh, the heavenly smile that softened his lips—the angelic sweetness which brightened and transfigured his whole face.

"Elinor," he said, abruptly, "I have come—"

I put up my hands in eager pleading. "Not to talk of myself just yet," he said. "I have something to tell you. Elinor, I bring you blessed news. Oh, believe me, I am thankful that I am permitted to be the bearer. You were right to love on—against reason—against proofs—Leonard Balliol was worthy."

I grew so white and weak that I nearly fell from the chair.

"Tell me," I said, clutching his arm, eagerly. "He hurried back to London to see you—to console you. But his uncle met him with a terrible story. He showed what seemed indisputable proofs that your father had been dishonest—"

"It is false, false—I will not listen."

"Wait, Elinor. Of course it was false; but then the proofs were so carefully prepared that they seemed indisputable. He agreed to be silent on one condition—that his nephew would end his engagement with you. Leonard consented. He knew that it would not break your heart to lose a man who showed himself unworthy of your affection; but not all his love could save you from the effects of shame and disgrace."

"Oh, my God!" I moaned.

"He gave you up to screen your father's memory—gave you up for your own sake and your mother's, and for those little children, whose whole future would have been wrecked by the disclosures the ruthless old man swore to make. You were lost to Leonard in any case. He knew you would never consent to marry him if your father's name was tarnished. So, to save that, to spare you, he did an act worthy of the noblest martyr who ever lived. He let his own honour be darkened in your eyes, allowed you to believe him a perjured, despicable man; and went away to bear his burden as best he might."

"You have seen him—your—"

"Yes. We have been in correspondence for a good while. Agnes Perkins knew the reason he left you. Mr. Balliol had given her some papers to copy, and by accident he had left a letter among them which told the story. She had begun to copy it before she discovered that it must have been put there by mistake. She told me—she knew the secret was safe—I wrote at once to Leonard."

"But my father," I cried. "Oh, can't it be set right now?"

"It is," he answered. "Leonard and I have gone over his uncle's books. Mr. Balliol died so

suddenly that he had no time to destroy them. We found the proofs that it was he who had played the villain—had been systematically cheating your father."

"So it is all clear, Elinor," he went on, as I sat speechless. "I have watched you carefully. Weeks ago I knew that you were right. There was no room for my hopes. 'See, dear child, don't weep—believe me, I have grown used to the disappointment. To-day I am so happy over the good news I bring that I could not have a selfish thought if I tried.'"

He moved quickly across the room. I heard him open the door which led into the dining-room. I could not speak, could not look up.

Then I heard steps again and a voice called: "Elinor, Elinor!"

And I saw Leonard Balliol kneeling at my feet. I heard Mr. Ogilvie say:

"The night has passed—lo, the new morning!"

Then he went softly out, leaving us two alone with our happiness.

What shall I tell you more? I have been a happy wife for more than two years. Yesterday there came to me a new joy. I had long believed that my friend Agnes cared for Mr. Ogilvie. I used to tell Leonard that if I could see them married I should have nothing left to wish for in this world.

So yesterday as I was writing in my morning-room I heard Agnes, who has been visiting me for a week, open the door.

"Come in," I said, without turning round.

"I shall have finished this letter in a few minutes."

Presently I felt her shake my chair. I looked up. She and Mr. Ogilvie were bending over me—oh, I knew what their faces meant.

"Is it?" I cried, clapping my hands like a mad woman. "Is it?"

"Only that and nothing more," quoted my husband, whom I now saw standing a little behind the pair, and he laughed gleefully.

Then Mr. Ogilvie put out his hand and drew Agnes gently towards him, and I threw my arms about them both and cried from sheer happiness, and Agnes cried a little too, and then mamma came in and we were all happy together.

HOW THEY MARRY IN POLAND.

In Poland, it seems, it is not the would-be bridegroom who proposes to his lady love, but a friend. The two go together to the young girl's house, carrying with them a loaf of bread, a bottle of brandy, and a new pocket handkerchief. When they are shown into the "best" room, the friend asks for a wine-glass; if it is produced at once it is a good sign; if not they take their leave without another word, as they understand that their proposal would not be accepted.

Suppose, however, that the desired wine-glass is forthcoming, then the friend drinks to the father and mother's health, and then asks where their daughter is, upon which the mother goes to fetch her. When she comes into the room the friend (always the friend) offers her the glass, filled with brandy. If she puts it to her lips and is willing, and the proposal is made at once. But it is the fashion to refuse it several times before finally accepting. Then the friend takes out the new handkerchief and ties the young people's hands together with it, after which it is tied round the girl's head, and she wears it as a sign of betrothal till her wedding-day, which is very soon afterwards, as on the Sunday following the proposal the banns are published.

On the wedding-day itself all the bridesmen and bridesmaids go round to all the friends and acquaintances of the two families and invite them to the wedding. At each house they must dance a Cracovian. During this the bride is being dressed by other young friends of hers, while young men sing virtuous strophes to her. When all the guests are assembled the bride kneels for her parents' blessing, and then she is placed in a carriage with her betrothed and the

friend. Up are presented thrown over up and after the young c singing, and when she room. But h cut off, and This custom plied with. for seven day tion, after w mencing by neighbourh

MANY pe never have meet with hysterical to anxiety to never have almost exclud meet with it and boys.

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friend. Upon returning home, bread and salt are presented to the young people, and wheat thrown over their heads. The wheat is picked up and afterwards sown; if it bears good fruit the young couple will be prosperous. Dancing, singing, and feasting are kept up till morning, when the young people are accompanied to their room. But before then the bride's hair has been cut off, and she is coiffée with the matron's cap. This custom is terrible, but it has to be complied with. The wedding festivities are kept up for seven days and seven nights without interruption, after which the wedding visits begin, commencing by the older proprietor or lord of the neighbourhood.

HYSTERIA.

MANY people are distinctly hysterical, but never have a fit of hysterics. We often meet with young women who, from their hysterical tendencies, are a source of constant anxiety to their friends, but who, nevertheless, never have any definite outbreak. It occurs almost exclusively in the female sex, but still we meet with it every now and then both in men and boys.

The case is recorded of a young doctor who was distinctly hysterical. He was exceedingly attentive to his own sensations, and fancied that he laboured under a number of diseases that had no existence but in his own imagination; he showed great uneasiness and infirmity of purpose; was what is called "very nervous," and had occasional outbursts of choking tears and laughter, exactly resembling those so frequently met with in the other sex.

In women hysteria generally makes its appearance about the age of sixteen, or from that to twenty. When once established it may last for years—in fact, for a life-time. When it occurs in men it generally begins later—about the age of forty. In them it is usually the result of over work or excessive worry and anxiety, and that is about the age at which these begin to tell. There is often considerable deterioration of health, an impaired nutrition, and a feeble circulation, with exhausted brain.

Hysteria occurs in all conditions of life, but it is more frequently met with in the unmarried man than in the married, although it is by no means confined to the former. Its more frequent occurrence in single women is probably the result of their social surroundings. A woman, if not married, has, as a rule, very little to do at all events, in the middle and upper classes of society. She has no housekeeping to attend to, no children to look after, nothing, in fact to occupy her mind and rouse her out of herself, and this condition is pre-eminently favourable to the development of hysteria. On the other hand, a wife with a family has a good deal to occupy her attention—in fact, she is more likely to be overworked than not; she has to think of other people besides herself, and an attack of hysteria finds no place in the routine of her daily duties. An active employment and hysteria seem almost to be antagonistic.

STATISTICS.

WRECKS IN 1880.—The approximate value of vessels of all nationalities, with their cargoes, lost in all parts of the world during the year 1880 was no less than £68,327,000, including British property £47,495,000. The grand total number of wrecks reported was 1,680, which, compared with the total at the end of 1879 shows a decrease of eight. British-owned ships numbered 913, and those of all flags wrecked on the coasts of the British Isles were 480. The registered tonnage aggregated upwards of 900,000 tons, inclusive of 160 steam vessels, mostly owned in the United Kingdom. About 4,000

lives were lost, and about 200 vessels were lost through collision.

THE SPREAD OF LANGUAGES.—The progress of languages spoken by different peoples is said to be as follows: English, which, at the commencement of the century was only spoken by 22 millions, is now spoken by 90 millions; Russian by 63 millions instead of 30 millions; German by 66 instead of 38; Spanish by 44 instead of 32; Italian by 30 instead of 18; Portuguese by 13 instead of 8. This is, for England, an increase of 310 per cent.; for Russia, 110 per cent.; for Germany, 70 per cent.; for Spain, 36 per cent., etc. In the case of France the increase has been from 34 to 46 millions, or 36 per cent.

A SPRIG OF DAPHNE.

CAN I not speak? Have I no voice
To whisper soft—"Beware!"
When, repent, to the bearded lips
He lifts the leaf that touched her hair?

Must I no subtle warning give
To save from pain, and wound, and
scar,
No ruddy signal wave, to tell
Of torch mistaken for a star?

To tell him that a gilded palm
Stretched sooner out could take
The blossom that she bid him "wear
And keep, tho' faded, for her sake."

Ah! could I whisper in his ear
The cold decision I have heard,
To steal his heart and fling it down;
Alas! I find nor sound nor word.

I have no voice, I can but die
The sooner, full of bitter pain
That o'er my fragrant tablet lies
No written truth, no warning stain.

Ay! fling me down! poor, wounded
heart;
I would have saved you, master,
this,
If speech had been vouchsafed to me
Last night, beneath your raptured
kiss.

Your turn has come, the shaft was
swift,
Its poisoned errand to conclude;
Yet courage take! it was Love's ghost,
Not Love itself, you warmly wooed.

A sprig of Daphne, crushed and dim,
A bearded face more stern and set,
That's all; bring in fresh blossoms
now.

Who's next? Smile on, Coquette.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

IRISH STEW.—(1.) Cut up into outlets three pounds of the best end of a neck of mutton, saw off the chine bone, and trim off the fat; season the outlets well with pepper and salt, and put them with the bones into a stewpan, just covering them with cold water; stew gently for half an hour, remove from the fire, skim the fat from the gravy, and then return it with the chops into the stewpan, add about eight potatoes cut in halves, four onions sliced, a couple of turnips, and one and a-half pints of either stock or water; cover the stewpan, and simmer gently for one and a half to two hours. Serve with the potatoes in the centre of the dish, the outlets arranged all round, and with the onions and gravy poured over. (2) For a more economical stew take the scrag of mutton, together with any trimmings, bones, etc., from the best end.

To one pound of meat put two pounds of old potatoes, peeled and cut in pieces, with two onions sliced, pepper and salt, cover with cold water or weak stock, and simmer gently for a couple of hours; when half done add a few whole potatoes, and when the ingredients are well amalgamated skim off superfluous fat and serve very hot.

TO BOIL ONIONS.—Peel medium-sized white onions and let them stand in cold water one hour, then put them into boiling water and boil fifteen minutes, pour out this water and put in more boiling water, and cook till soft; then pour off the water and put in a little milk; season with butter and salt, and let them cook in the milk about five minutes, thicken the gravy with a little flour and water. This way of cooking will take away the strong taste of the onions, making them tender outside as well as inside.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Irish state trials have cost the enormous sum of £15,000 or £20,000.

ASTRONOMERS say they have lately discovered dark spots of an unusual character on the planet Jupiter.

AMERICA boasts of the biggest father in existence in the person of John Heffner, of Reading (U.S.), who emigrated from Germany in 1864. By three wives in Germany and America he has had no less than 41 children!

LORD BRACONSFIELD'S Hughenden tenantry have learnt, through Mr. Arthur Vernon, the agent, that his lordship has remitted 20 per cent. on the Michaelmas rents at the audit at the end of January. This is the fifth occasion on which such a practical proof of the sympathy with the agricultural difficulties of the times has been shown to his tenants by the noble earl.

MR. GOUGH made the following sensible and telling reply to a spiritist who wanted Mr. Gough to attend a meeting to converse with his mother: "If my mother, who knows I love her dearly and treasure every little relic she left behind her, and who knows that I would be glad to see her and hear her speak, will not communicate with me except through mediums, and séances, and table-rapping by a parcel of people who know nothing about her and care as little, I do not wish to hear anything, for I think my mother must be deteriorated to descend to such tricks to communicate with one who loves her as well as I do."

At a recent wedding in Philadelphia there was a novelty in the dress of the bridesmaids. They wore suits of ivory-white camel's-hair cloth, trimmed with soft bands of swansdown, supplemented with large white plush hats and drooping feathers. The novelty was most effective.

ON Wednesday the 26th January during the performances at the Folly Theatre, Mr. Toole, the well-known actor, and lessee of the house, ordered several pails of hot whiskey-punch to be made, taken up to the gallery, and tumblers of the drink to be given to each person in that, the cheapest part of the building, so as to counteract the bitter cold of the evening. He is, in consequence, now by far the most popular actor in London with the working classes.

THE following is the signification of the shattering of the glass at the recent Rothschild wedding: Wine is brought in a brittle vessel, and being six times blessed, the married couple drink thereof, and the rest of it, in token of joy, is cast on the ground; then the bridegroom, in memory of the ruin of their city and temple, with force dashes the vessel to the ground.

It is said that the Empress Eugénie, on settling herself at Farnborough, will publish a biography of the Prince Imperial, written by herself, to be followed by Les Notes de Napoléon, which will contain revelations as to some politicians of the day. M. Rouher has assisted her Majesty in collecting all the notes written by the Emperor during his reign.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

A. M. E.—Diamonds were first brought from the East, where the mine of Sumbulpour was the first known, and where the mines of Golconda were first discovered in the year 1484, those of Brazil in 1728.

G. R.—Gold is the most ductile and the most malleable, iron is the most tenacious, and titanium the hardest of metals in their native state. Titanium, discovered in 1791, is rare, and little used in science or industry.

S. S.—Persons annoyed with "blackheads" or flesh-worms should avoid the use of very salt, rich or greasy food. A tablespoonful of magnesia taken once or twice a week sometimes proves highly beneficial.

L. P.—To clean statuary marble, put two ounces of carbonate of soda in one quart of cold water. Brush the marble with a clean paint brush dipped in this solution, rinsing constantly with clean water.

C. T.—For articles of rubber which have become hard and brittle the following treatment is recommended: Immerse the articles in a mixture of water of ammonia one part, and water two parts, for a time varying from a few minutes to an hour, according to the circumstances of the case. When the mixture has acted enough on the rubber it will be found to have recovered all its elasticity, smoothness, and softness.

A. W.—The sun is 3,000,000 miles farther from the earth in July than it is in January.

G. R.—Let the moles on your face alone. It is very difficult to remove them without leaving a scar.

H. H. D.—To remove ink from cloth dip the stained part in a solution of salt of lemons (oxalic acid), and immediately after the stain has disappeared wash out the fabric in clear cold water. 2. To take ink out of paper, apply to it a camel's hair pencil dipped alternately in solutions of cyanide of potassium and oxalic acid.

G. C.—To mount chromes, take unbleached muslin and stretch it over a wooden strainer; next dampen the back of the picture with paste and lay it on the canvas; then with a dry rag rub well the back of the canvas to prevent blistering.

M. B.—You can root an ivy slip by putting a ball of moss around the end and placing it in a bottle of water where it can be kept constantly moist. When roots have been formed, it may be set in a pot of earth. It requires a rich soil, and while growing an abundance of water.

PROSTRATE.—There is a preparation called Crosby's Vitalized Phosphate which is largely recommended as an invigorator in mental or nervous prostration. A bottle, costing three shillings and ninepence, post free, can be had of F. Crosby, 137a, Strand, London.

DRESSMAKER.—James Spence and Co., Wholesale Drapers, St. Paul's Churchyard, issue a Fashion Magazine illustrating the latest Novelties in Dress and Millinery, post free for Three Halfpence, which you would not doubt find extremely useful.

M. C. H.—According to ancient pictures and carvings the umbrella was used in remote antiquity by the Persians and other oriental people. But it is supposed that they used it principally as a protection against the sun rather than the rain. The umbrella was not used in Europe and America until within a comparatively recent period. It is said that the man who first carried an umbrella in the streets of London was named Jonas Hanway, and that he died in 1786. At that time those who carried umbrellas were not mobbed, but they were jeered at and ridiculed by the crowd for their effeminacy in thus seeking to protect themselves from the rain. Previous to the introduction of the umbrella the hackney coach was the refuge of pedestrians who were caught in a shower, or else they sought shelter in covered archways or public houses. After the introduction of umbrellas it was customary for every coffee-house to keep one, which was lent in cases of emergency, and a boy was always sent along to carry it, and bring it back. In that way the return of a borrowed umbrella was insured—an improvement upon the customs of to-day.

J. S. would like to correspond with a lady with a view to matrimony.

CHARLES and HENRY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Charles is seventeen, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Henry is sixteen, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Respondents must be about sixteen, tall, fair, good-looking.

N. B. and ROYAL YARD, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. N. B. is twenty-one, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Royal Yard is twenty, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

TOM, sixteen, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

ROSE and VIOLET, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Rose is twenty-two, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of music. Violet is nineteen, medium height, dark, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be about twenty-six, tall, fond of home.

ROB ROY, RODERICK DHU and CALLUM BEE, three young Highlanders, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Rob Roy is twenty-two, medium height, dark, good-looking. Roderick Dhu is twenty-one, tall, fair, good-looking. Callum Bee is twenty-three, tall, good-looking. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

MINNIE, twenty-two, dark, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-four.

THE REQUEST.

Oh, beautiful moon!
I pray thee to-night,
Look down from thy splendour above;
From your high home of light,
Where thou shinest so bright,
Oh, whisper to me of my love.
As she smiles o'er the deep
Do thy silent rays creep
Softly over his tresses of gold?
Does the gentle breeze fan his bonnie brown cheek,
Whilst the shimmering stars their soft vigils keep,
And around him their brightness unfold?
Oh, silvery moon!
As thou'rt kissing the sea,
Pray tell me to-night,
Is he thinking of me?

Oh, beautiful moon!
He only I pray
(For to thee alone I confide),
While your silver beams play,
In glorious array,
Far out on the murmuring tide,
Does my darling now sleep,
While the sparkling waves leap,
Laughing gaily and singing to you?
Oh! go and for me let thy glided rays speak,
Whilst the twinkling stars in their place fondly peep,
In your winning tones ask if he's true.
Oh, silvery moon!
Gliding over the sea,
Pray tell me to-night,
Is he thinking of me?

LOVING JENNY and PAIR EMILE, two friends, would like to correspond with two mechanics. Respondents must be between twenty-four and twenty-six, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

DAISY and CONSTANCE, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy with a view to matrimony. Daisy is twenty-one, tall, brown hair and eyes, good-looking, fond of home and music. Constance is nineteen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition.

VENTPIECE, PROJECTILE and CHARGE, three young men in the Royal Marine Artillery, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. Ventpiece is twenty-two, tall, fair, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of music and dancing. Projectile is twenty-three, tall, dark, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Charge is twenty-three, tall, fair, auburn hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

LENA, FANNY, NELLIE, and JANET, four friends, would like to correspond with four young men. Lena, Fanny and Nellie are short, brown hair, blue eyes. Janet is tall, fair, brown hair, blue eyes.

HUBERT, nineteen, tall, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

FOLLIE and FANNIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Follie is twenty-two, medium height, dark, good-looking, fond of singing and dancing. Fannie is twenty-one, medium height, fair, good-looking, fond of home and children.

J. P. R., a clerk, twenty-five, medium height, dark, would like to correspond with a young lady about eighteen with a view to matrimony.

SNOWDROP, eighteen, short, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of dancing, would like to correspond with a tall, dark young man.

SPONGE BAG and SOAP DISH, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Sponge Bag is twenty, tall, golden hair, blue eyes, good-looking. Soap Dish is eighteen, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be good-looking.

ALICE, eighteen, medium height, dark hair, grey eyes, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty.

HARRY and TOM, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Harry is twenty-one, medium height, fair. Tom is twenty, tall, dark. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty.

ZILLIAN, a dressmaker, seventeen, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes, would like to correspond with a fair young gentleman about twenty-four.

BERTHA and FLORENCE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men between nineteen and twenty-two. Bertha is eighteen, fair, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home. Florence is eighteen, dark, fond of home and music.

LOVING LOTTIE, nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

ROSEBUD, AMY and PAULINE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Rosebud is twenty, tall, dark, good-looking, fond of home and children. Amy is nineteen, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of music and singing. Pauline is twenty-three, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Respondents must be between twenty-two and twenty-four, of a loving disposition.

LYDIA, eighteen, tall, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-six.

TEB, nineteen, tall, brown hair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

JIM and JAMES, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Jim is twenty-three, short, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home and children. James is twenty-two, tall, black hair, dark eyes, fond of music. Respondents must be about twenty, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

SARAH is responded to by—Lonely Lad, twenty, dark, medium height, good-looking.

CIS by—Tom Jones, twenty-five, medium height, dark, good-looking, fond of home.

RUBY by—Edward, twenty-four, medium height, fair, blue eyes, good-looking.

MAY by—Joseph, twenty-two, short, dark, blue eyes, good-looking.

CAPTAIN JACANA by—Violette A., medium height, fair, brown eyes.

COUNTRY BEAUTY by—J. H.

LOTTIE by—Tom, twenty-five, medium height, brown hair and eyes, good-looking.

BACHELOR by—Lonely One, thirty-three, medium height, fond of home.

ROMEO by—Jessie, twenty-one, tall, dark, fond of home and music.

JIB by—Milly, twenty, dark, good-looking.

SPARKER by—Edith, nineteen, dark, fond of home and children.

ROMEO by—Jessie D.

H. T. by—Harriet, twenty-six, medium height, fair, blue eyes.

CONSTANCE by—B. C. H., twenty-four, fond of music and dancing.

ROMEO by—Everlin G., nineteen, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

LOVELY LOTTIE by—Lonely Harry, twenty-two, dark, of a loving disposition.

JIB by—Loving Lotty, nineteen, medium height, of a loving disposition.

SPARKER by—Annie, eighteen, medium height, fond of home and children.

A. M. by—Edith, sixteen, tall, dark, good-looking.

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